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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN™
COCKRUM/WACKER

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE UNCANNY X-MEN!™

GOLD RUSH!

CHRIS CLAREMONT *writer* | DAVE COCKRUM *penciler* & BOB WIACEK *inker* | TOM ORZECHOWSKI, *letterer* GLYNIS WEIN, colorist | LOUISE JONES *editor* | JIM SHOOTER *editor-in-chief*

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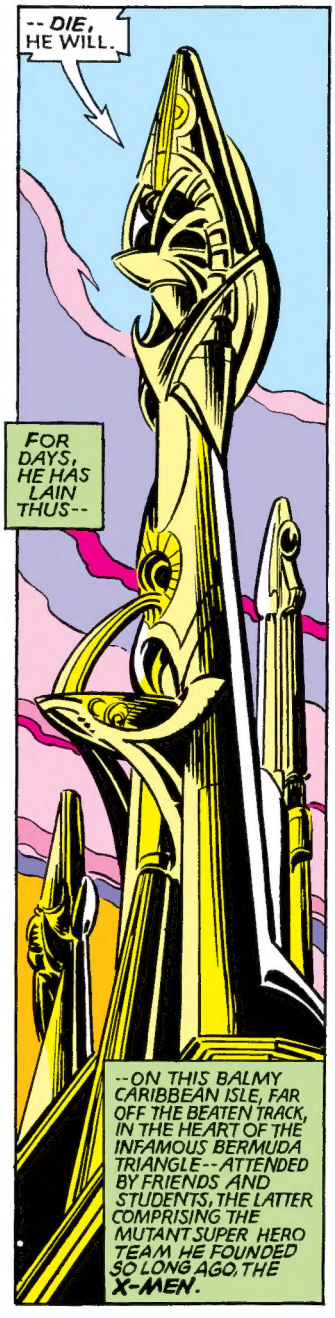
Ach, MY FRIENDS, IS THERE NOTHING WE CAN DO?!
IF THERE WAS, ELF...
...DON'T'CHA THINK WE'D BE DOIN' IT?
THERE'S NO CHANGE, SIKORSKY.
IS TO BE EXPECTED, MOIRA-COLLEAGUE. DATA INDICATES--XAVIER'S PSYCHE, MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL ON--A GREAT CONFLICT, RAGING IS. PRIZE IS HIS SANITY, LIFE ITSELF PERHAPS.
BUT XAVIER WARRIOR-LIKE FIGHTS. SURRENDER, REFUSES TO. BATTLE TOO LONG HAS LASTED, TOO MUCH OF BODY'S RESOURCES HAS DRAINED. IF RESOLVED IT IS NOT--AND SOON IT IS NOT--


--DIE, HE WILL.
FOR DAYS, HE HAS LAIN THUS--
--ON THIS BALMY CARIBBEAN ISLE, FAR OFF THE BEATEN TRACK, IN THE HEART OF THE INFAMOUS BERMUDA TRIANGLE--ATTENDED BY FRIENDS AND STUDENTS, THE LATTER COMPRISING THE MUTANT SUPER HERO TEAM HE FOUNDED SO LONG AGO, THE X-MEN.

WE'VE TRIED EVERY MEANS POSSIBLE TO BRING HIM AROUND, SCOTT--INCLUDING A MINDPROBE BY ANOTHER TELEPATH. BUT THAT ATTEMPT NEARLY KILLED US ALL. CHARLES' PSIONIC DEFENSES WERE TOO STRONG.
HE SEIZED CONTROL OF THE LASS--
--AND USED HER TO TRY TO DESTROY HIMSELF.

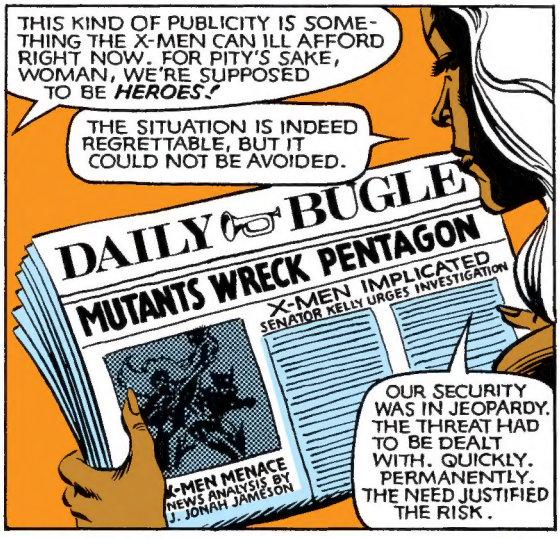
SUICIDE? HIM?! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, MOIRA--THAT THERE'S NO HOPE?!
THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE.
SPARE ME THE HOMILIES, DOCTOR. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY RING A LITTLE HOLLOW.

THIS IS AWFUL, LOGAN. I FEEL SO SAD.
BUT SCOTT SOUNDS FURIOUS--WHY?
HE'S BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE, KITTY--WITH JEAN GREY. IT'S A HARD THING FOR A MAN TO FACE--WATCHIN', WAITIN' HELPLESSLY WHILE SOMEONE YOU CARE FOR FIGHTS FOR THEIR LIFE--
--ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU FEEL AS DEEPLY AS SCOTTY DOES AN' TRY AS HARD TO HIDE THOSE FEELIN'S. IN THAT WAY, I GUESS HE'N I ARE A LOT ALIKE.

SCOTT...?
CORSAIR, LET ME BE THE ONE TO SPEAK WITH HIM.
HE'S MY SON, ORORO.
AND MY FRIEND. I DO NOT ASK THIS LIGHTLY.
ALL RIGHT, THEN. IF YOU THINK IT BEST.

THAT'S A MAGNIFICENT SUNSET, STORM. DID YOU USE YOUR WEATHER POWERS TO ARRANGE IT?
I AM FLATTERED THAT YOU THINK ME CAPABLE OF SUCH BEAUTY, CYCLOPS--BUT ALAS, I HAD NO PART IN IT. THIS IS ENTIRELY NATURE'S HANDIWORK.
I MUST CONFESS THAT, IN SOME WAYS, I PREFER THIS ISLE TO OUR OLD HEAD-QUARTERS BACK IN NEW YORK.

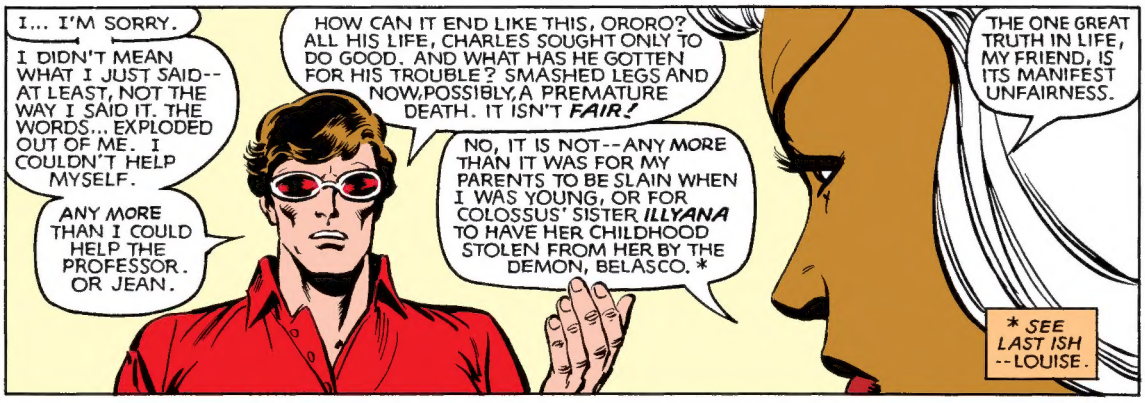
WELL, THANKS TO YOU, WE MAY BE HERE QUITE A WHILE.
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
ON MY WAY OUT HERE, I PICKED UP THIS PAPER. THE HEADLINE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.


THIS KIND OF PUBLICITY IS SOMETHING THE X-MEN CAN ILL AFFORD RIGHT NOW. FOR PITY'S SAKE, WOMAN, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE *HEROES*!
THE SITUATION IS INDEED REGRETTABLE, BUT IT COULD NOT BE AVOIDED.
DAILY BUGLE
MUTANTS WRECK PENTAGON
X-MEN IMPLICATED
SENATOR KELLY URGES INVESTIGATION
X-MEN MENACE
NEWS ANALYSIS BY J. JONAH JAMESON
OUR SECURITY WAS IN JEOPARDY. THE THREAT HAD TO BE DEALT WITH. QUICKLY. PERMANENTLY. THE NEED JUSTIFIED THE RISK.

THE X-MEN'S SECRET MAY BE SAFE, ORORO, BUT OUR REP COULDN'T BE WORSE. THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY PARANOID ABOUT MUTANTS. THIS FIASCO'S MADE MATTERS INFINITELY WORSE.
ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE SHOULD HAVE DONE NOTHING?
A BETTER WAY SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOUND TO ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION. I SHOULD'VE BEEN CONSULTED.

I AM TEAM LEADER, SCOTT, NOT YOU.
THEN PERHAPS IT'S TIME I TOOK MY OLD JOB BACK.

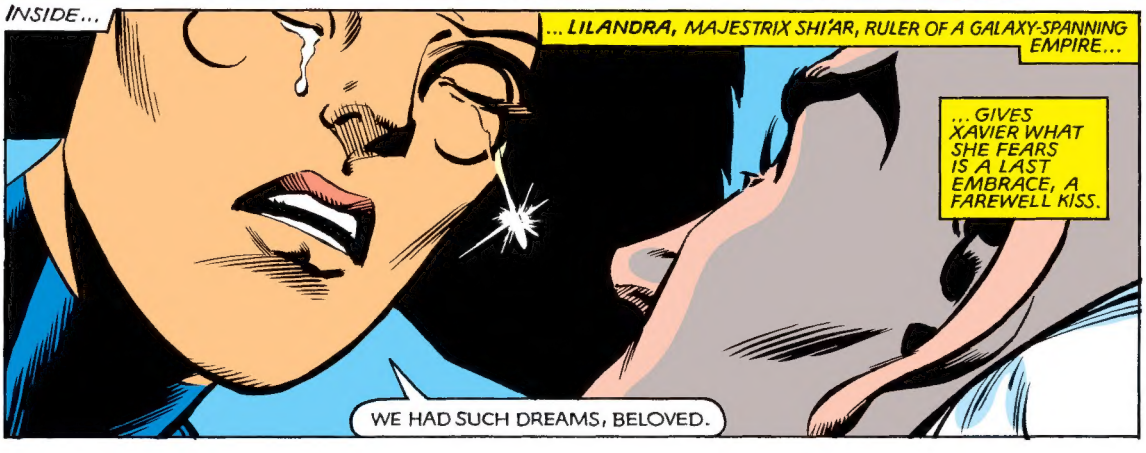
IF YOU WISH TO RECLAIM THAT POSITION, CYCLOPS, ALL YOU NEED DO--
IS ASK FOR IT!
ORORO, WAIT!
WHY?
DON'T GO! PLEASE!
YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

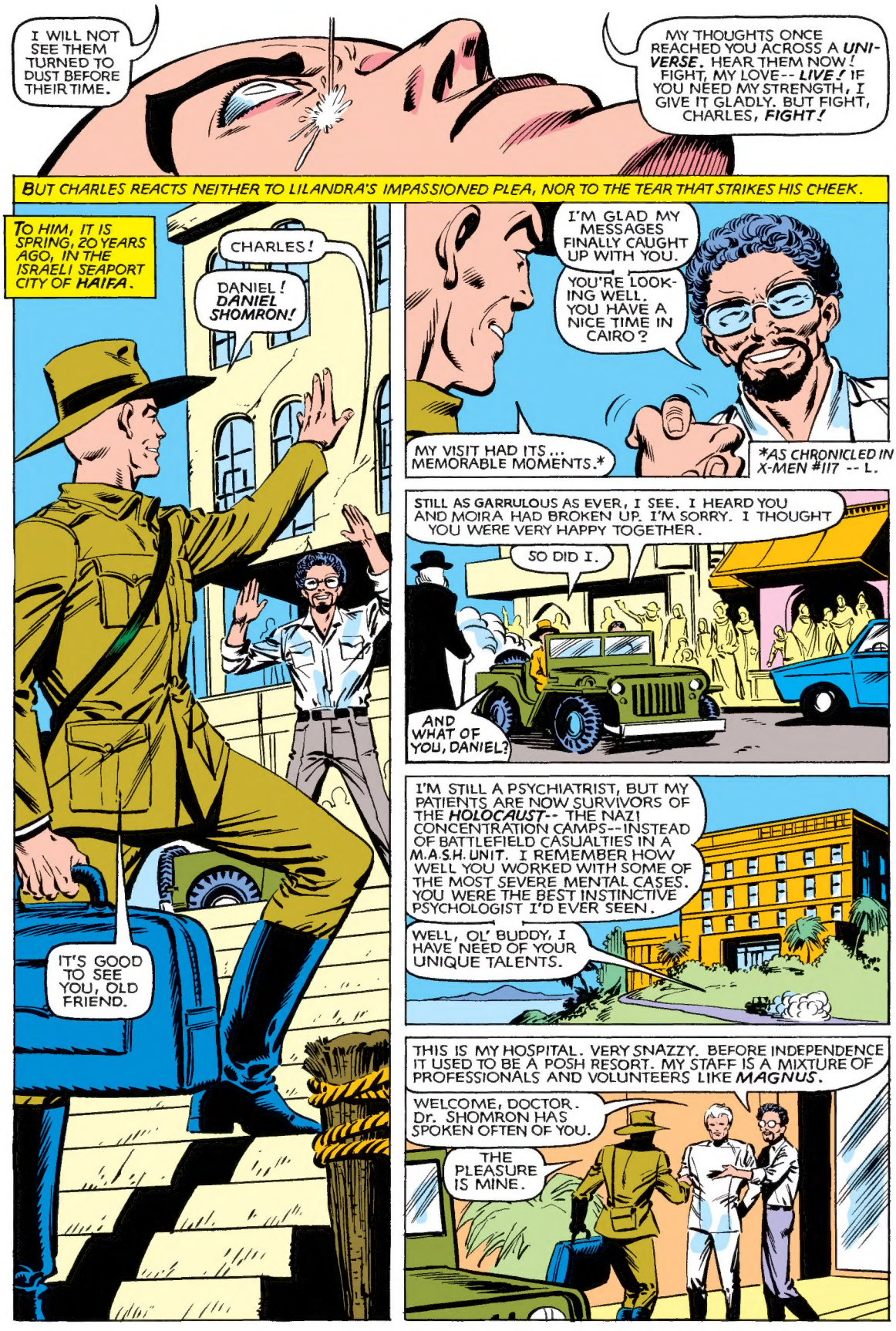

I... I'M SORRY.
I DIDN'T MEAN WHAT I JUST SAID-- AT LEAST, NOT THE WAY I SAID IT. THE WORDS... EXPLODED OUT OF ME. I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF.
ANY MORE THAN I COULD HELP THE PROFESSOR. OR JEAN.
HOW CAN IT END LIKE THIS, ORORO? ALL HIS LIFE, CHARLES SOUGHT ONLY TO DO GOOD. AND WHAT HAS HE GOTTEN FOR HIS TROUBLE? SMASHED LEGS AND NOW, POSSIBLY, A PREMATURE DEATH. IT ISN'T FAIR!
NO, IT IS NOT--ANY MORE THAN IT WAS FOR MY PARENTS TO BE SLAIN WHEN I WAS YOUNG, OR FOR COLOSSUS' SISTER ILLYANA TO HAVE HER CHILDHOOD STOLEN FROM HER BY THE DEMON, BELASCO. *
THE ONE GREAT TRUTH IN LIFE, MY FRIEND, IS ITS MANIFEST UNFAIRNESS.
* SEE LAST ISH --LOUISE.

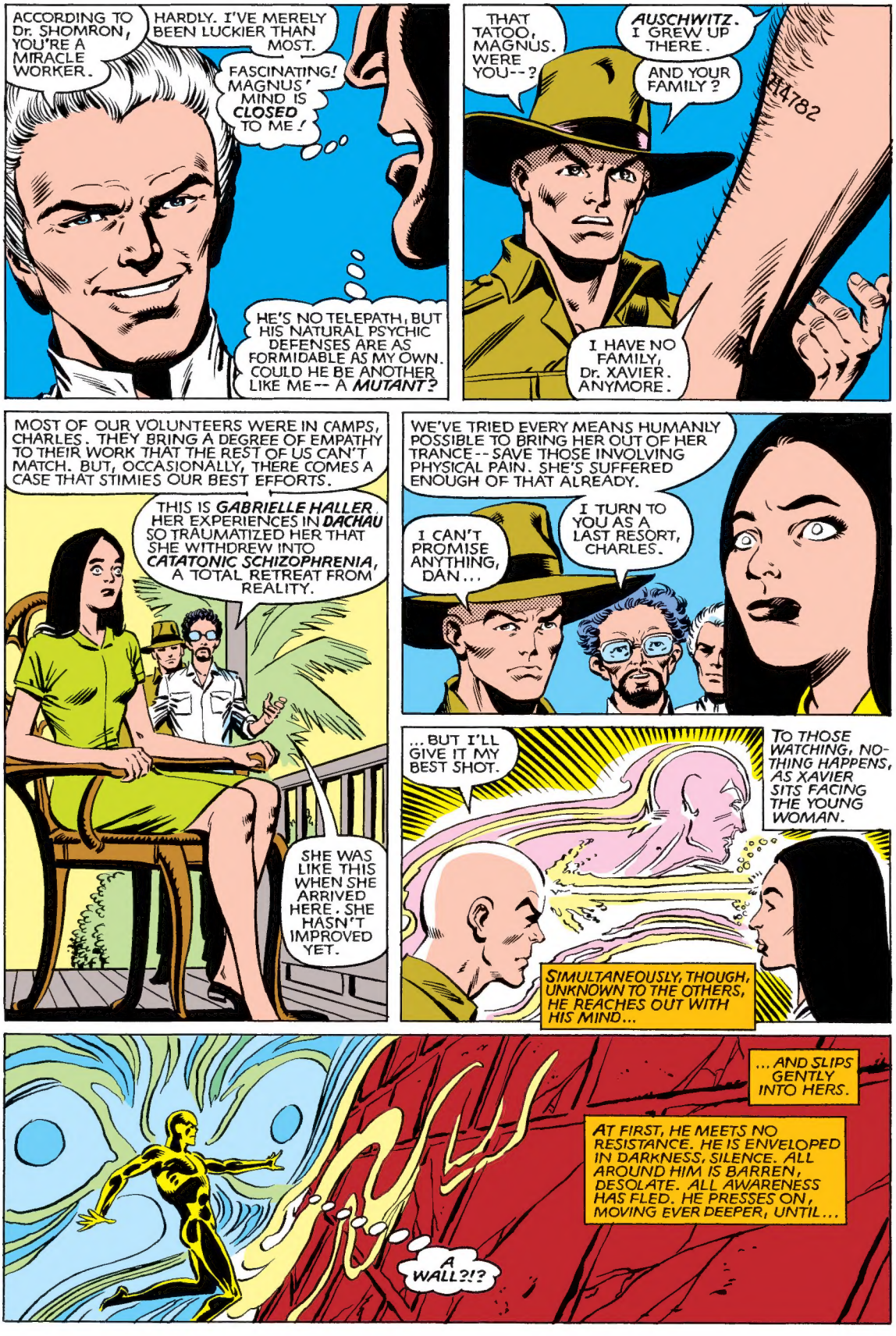
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHATEVER I AM-- AS AN X-MAN, AS A MAN-- IS LARGELY DUE TO HIM. HE'S AS MUCH MY FATHER AS CORSAIR.
I... I... LOVE HIM, ORORO.
AND I CAN'T BEAR SEEING HIM LIKE THIS.

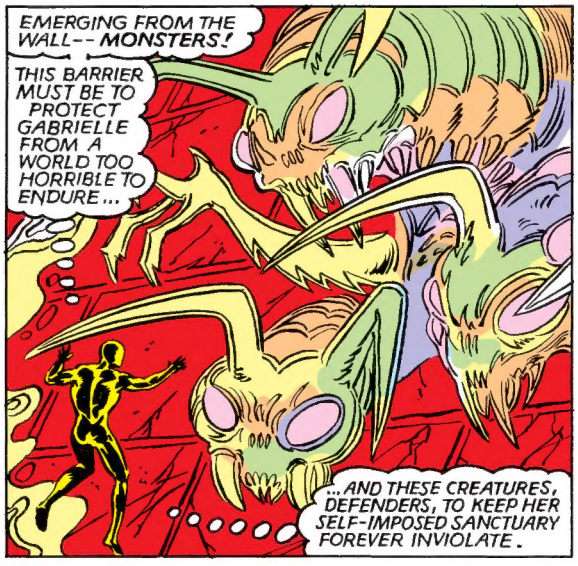
IT'S JEAN-- IT'S THE ORPHANAGE, WHERE I GREW UP-- ALL OVER AGAIN. I REACH OUT TO SOMEONE, I CARE, I MAKE MYSELF VULNERABLE AND-- WHAM!-- THEY'RE GONE. AND I'M ALONE.
HECKUVA NOTE, ISN'T IT? XAVIER'S DYING, AND I'M FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF.
SCOTT, BECAUSE OF WHO AND WHAT WE ARE, WE ALL WALK IN THE SHADOW OF THE REAPER.

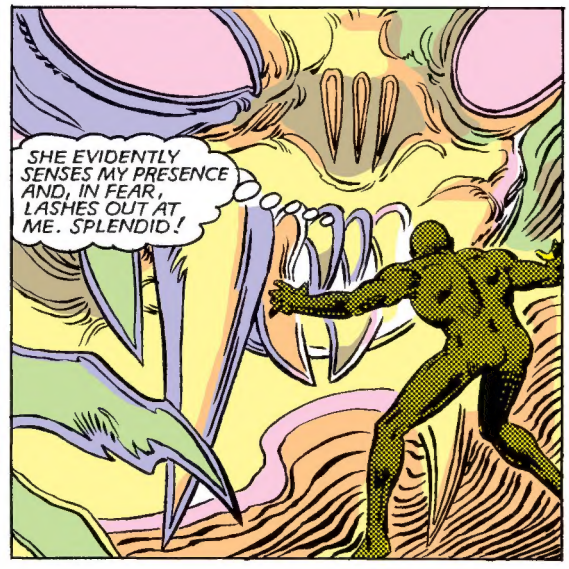
BUT, BY THE SAME TOKEN, WE ARE NEVER ALONE! THE LOVE YOU BORE JEAN--AND BEAR CHARLES-- IS FELT BY US FOR YOU. AND FROM THAT LOVE COMES STRENGTH THAT WILL SUSTAIN US THROUGH ANY TRIAL.
IF HE DIES...
WE WILL GO ON.
I... NEED YOU, ORORO. HELP ME.
FOOLISH MAN, YOU HAD BUT TO ASK.


INSIDE...
... LILANDRA, MAJESTRIX SHI'AR, RULER OF A GALAXY-SPANNING EMPIRE...
... GIVES XAVIER WHAT SHE FEARS IS A LAST EMBRACE, A FAREWELL KISS.
WE HAD SUCH DREAMS, BELOVED.

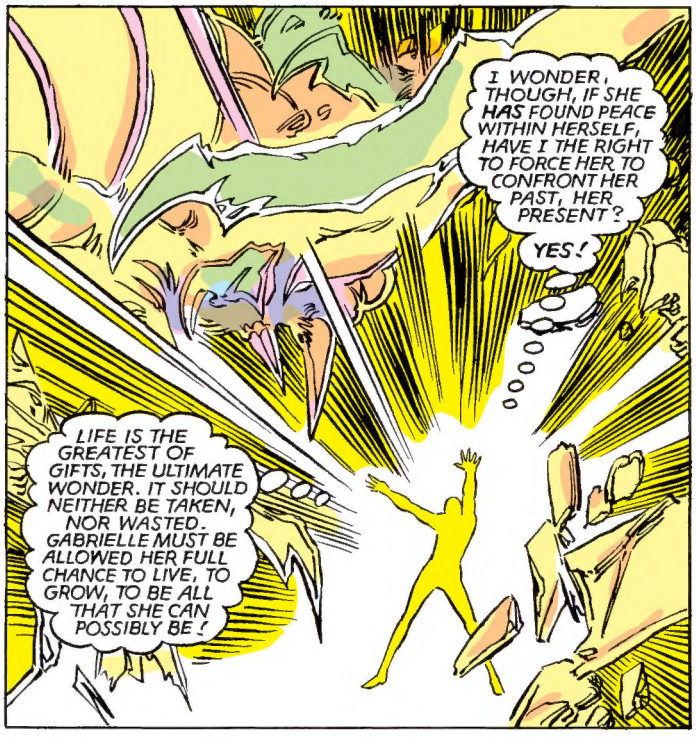

I WILL NOT SEE THEM TURNED TO DUST BEFORE THEIR TIME.
MY THOUGHTS ONCE REACHED YOU ACROSS A UNIVERSE. HEAR THEM NOW! FIGHT, MY LOVE-- LIVE! IF YOU NEED MY STRENGTH, I GIVE IT GLADLY. BUT FIGHT, CHARLES, FIGHT!
BUT CHARLES REACTS NEITHER TO LILANDRA'S IMPASSIONED PLEA, NOR TO THE TEAR THAT STRIKES HIS CHEEK.
TO HIM, IT IS SPRING, 20 YEARS AGO, IN THE ISRAELI SEAPORT CITY OF HAIFA.
CHARLES!
DANIEL! DANIEL SHOMRON!
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, OLD FRIEND.
I'M GLAD MY MESSAGES FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH YOU.
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL. YOU HAVE A NICE TIME IN CAIRO?
MY VISIT HAD ITS... MEMORABLE MOMENTS.*
*AS CHRONICLED IN X-MEN #117 -- L.
STILL AS GARRULOUS AS EVER, I SEE. I HEARD YOU AND MOIRA HAD BROKEN UP. I'M SORRY. I THOUGHT YOU WERE VERY HAPPY TOGETHER.
SO DID I.
AND WHAT OF YOU, DANIEL?
I'M STILL A PSYCHIATRIST, BUT MY PATIENTS ARE NOW SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST-- THE NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS--INSTEAD OF BATTLEFIELD CASUALTIES IN A M.A.S.H. UNIT. I REMEMBER HOW WELL YOU WORKED WITH SOME OF THE MOST SEVERE MENTAL CASES. YOU WERE THE BEST INSTINCTIVE PSYCHOLOGIST I'D EVER SEEN.
WELL, OL' BUDDY, I HAVE NEED OF YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS.
THIS IS MY HOSPITAL. VERY SNAZZY. BEFORE INDEPENDENCE IT USED TO BE A POSH RESORT. MY STAFF IS A MIXTURE OF PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS LIKE MAGNUS.
WELCOME, DOCTOR. Dr. SHOMRON HAS SPOKEN OFTEN OF YOU.
THE PLEASURE IS MINE.

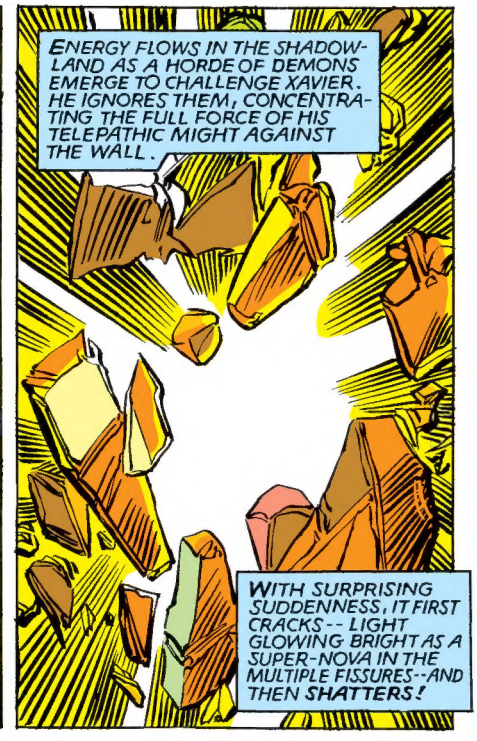

ACCORDING TO Dr. SHOMRON, YOU'RE A MIRACLE WORKER.
HARDLY. I'VE MERELY BEEN LUCKIER THAN MOST.
FASCINATING! MAGNUS' MIND IS CLOSED TO ME!
HE'S NO TELEPATH, BUT HIS NATURAL PSYCHIC DEFENSES ARE AS FORMIDABLE AS MY OWN. COULD HE BE ANOTHER LIKE ME -- A MUTANT?
THAT TATOO, MAGNUS. WERE YOU--?
AUSCHWITZ. I GREW UP THERE.
AND YOUR FAMILY?
I HAVE NO FAMILY, Dr. XAVIER. ANYMORE.
MOST OF OUR VOLUNTEERS WERE IN CAMPS, CHARLES. THEY BRING A DEGREE OF EMPATHY TO THEIR WORK THAT THE REST OF US CAN'T MATCH. BUT, OCCASIONALLY, THERE COMES A CASE THAT STIMIES OUR BEST EFFORTS.
THIS IS GABRIELLE HALLER. HER EXPERIENCES IN DACHAU SO TRAUMATIZED HER THAT SHE WITHDREW INTO CATATONIC SCHIZOPHRENIA, A TOTAL RETREAT FROM REALITY.
SHE WAS LIKE THIS WHEN SHE ARRIVED HERE. SHE HASN'T IMPROVED YET.
WE'VE TRIED EVERY MEANS HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO BRING HER OUT OF HER TRANCE -- SAVE THOSE INVOLVING PHYSICAL PAIN. SHE'S SUFFERED ENOUGH OF THAT ALREADY.
I TURN TO YOU AS A LAST RESORT, CHARLES.
I CAN'T PROMISE ANYTHING, DAN...
... BUT I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST SHOT.
TO THOSE WATCHING, NOTHING HAPPENS, AS XAVIER SITS FACING THE YOUNG WOMAN.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, THOUGH, UNKNOWN TO THE OTHERS, HE REACHES OUT WITH HIS MIND...
... AND SLIPS GENTLY INTO HERS.
AT FIRST, HE MEETS NO RESISTANCE. HE IS ENVELOPED IN DARKNESS, SILENCE. ALL AROUND HIM IS BARREN, DESOLATE. ALL AWARENESS HAS FLED. HE PRESSES ON, MOVING EVER DEEPER, UNTIL...
A WALL?!?

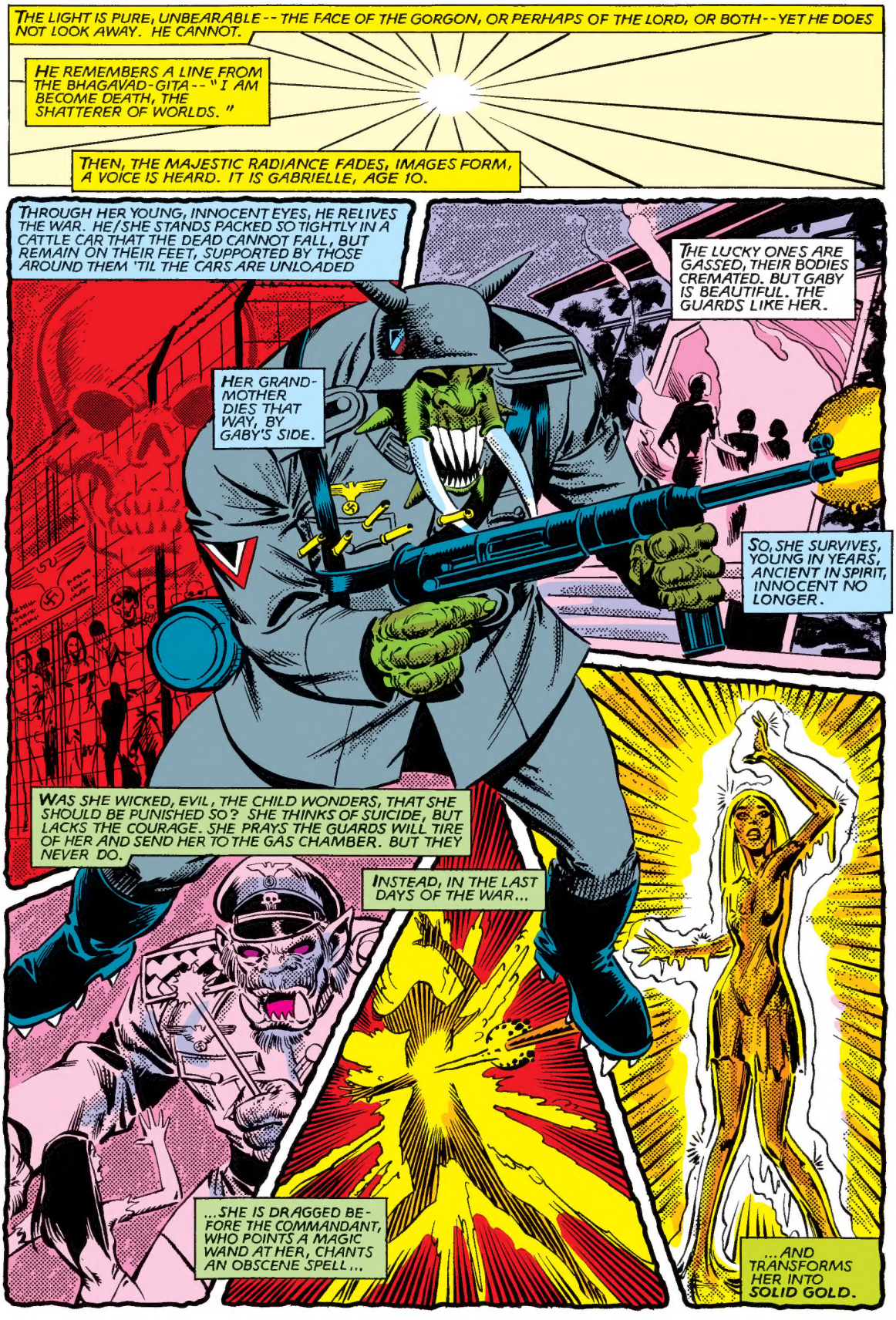

EMERGING FROM THE WALL-- MONSTERS!
THIS BARRIER MUST BE TO PROTECT GABRIELLE FROM A WORLD TOO HORRIBLE TO ENDURE...
...AND THESE CREATURES, DEFENDERS, TO KEEP HER SELF-IMPOSED SANCTUARY FOREVER INVIOLATE.

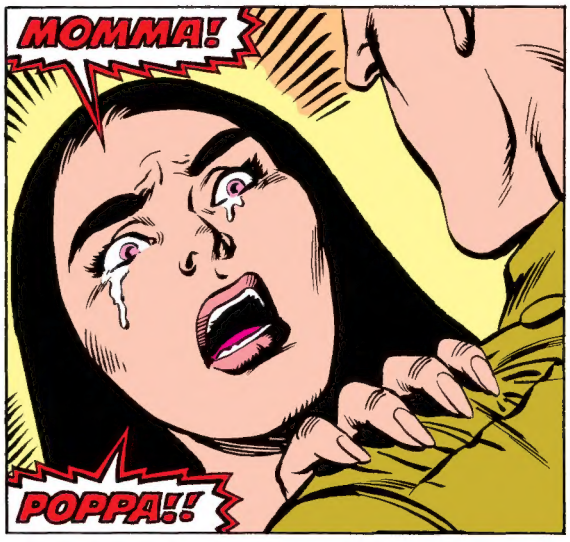

SHE EVIDENTLY SENSES MY PRESENCE AND, IN FEAR, LASHES OUT AT ME. SPLENDID!

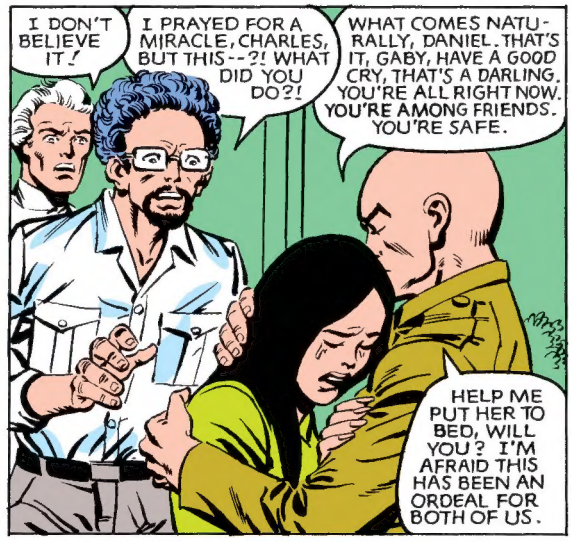
THAT MEANS HER MIND STILL FUNCTIONS! SHE CAN BE RESTORED TO CONSCIOUSNESS!
HOWEVER, WHILE THESE MAY BE LITERAL FIGMENTS OF HER IMAGINATION, THAT MAKES THEM NO LESS DEADLY. THEY CAN KILL ME -- IF I LET THEM.
HER WILL IS STRONG. SHE'S PUTTING UP A GOOD FIGHT.

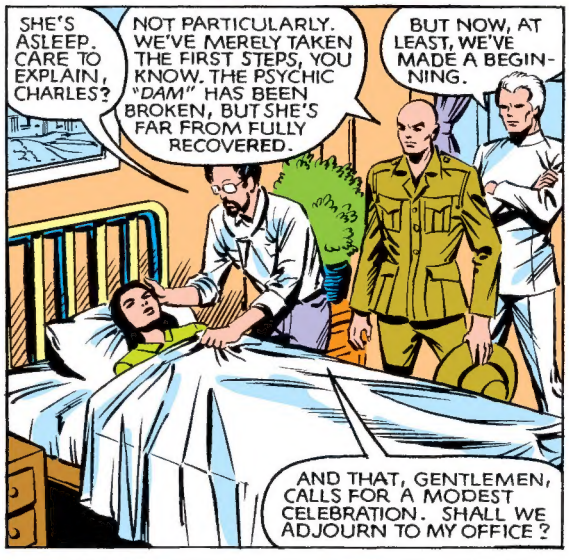

I WONDER, THOUGH, IF SHE HAS FOUND PEACE WITHIN HERSELF, HAVE I THE RIGHT TO FORCE HER TO CONFRONT HER PAST, HER PRESENT?
YES!
LIFE IS THE GREATEST OF GIFTS, THE ULTIMATE WONDER. IT SHOULD NEITHER BE TAKEN, NOR WASTED. GABRIELLE MUST BE ALLOWED HER FULL CHANCE TO LIVE, TO GROW, TO BE ALL THAT SHE CAN POSSIBLY BE!

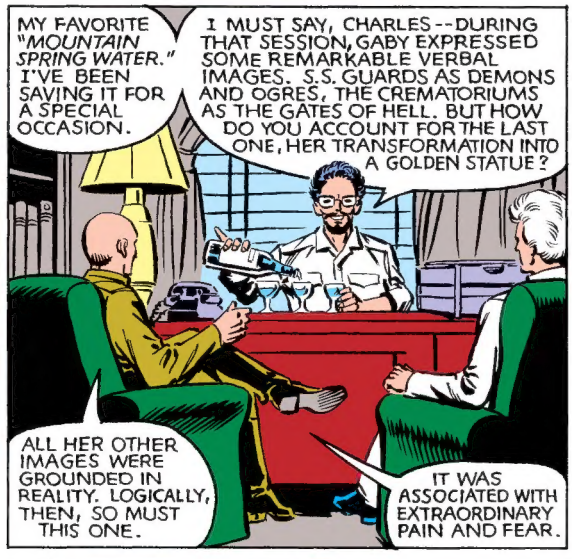

ENERGY FLOWS IN THE SHADOWLAND AS A HORDE OF DEMONS EMERGE TO CHALLENGE XAVIER. HE IGNORES THEM, CONCENTRATING THE FULL FORCE OF HIS TELEPATHIC MIGHT AGAINST THE WALL.
WITH SURPRISING SUDDENNESS, IT FIRST CRACKS -- LIGHT GLOWING BRIGHT AS A SUPER-NOVA IN THE MULTIPLE FISSURES--AND THEN SHATTERS!


THE LIGHT IS PURE, UNBEARABLE -- THE FACE OF THE GORGON, OR PERHAPS OF THE LORD, OR BOTH -- YET HE DOES NOT LOOK AWAY. HE CANNOT.
HE REMEMBERS A LINE FROM THE BHAGAVAD-GITA -- "I AM BECOME DEATH, THE SHATTERER OF WORLDS."
THEN, THE MAJESTIC RADIANCE FADES, IMAGES FORM, A VOICE IS HEARD. IT IS GABRIELLE, AGE 10.
THROUGH HER YOUNG, INNOCENT EYES, HE RELIVES THE WAR. HE/SHE STANDS PACKED SO TIGHTLY IN A CATTLE CAR THAT THE DEAD CANNOT FALL, BUT REMAIN ON THEIR FEET, SUPPORTED BY THOSE AROUND THEM 'TIL THE CARS ARE UNLOADED
THE LUCKY ONES ARE GASSED, THEIR BODIES CREMATED. BUT GABY IS BEAUTIFUL. THE GUARDS LIKE HER.
HER GRANDMOTHER DIES THAT WAY, BY GABY'S SIDE.
SO, SHE SURVIVES, YOUNG IN YEARS, ANCIENT IN SPIRIT, INNOCENT NO LONGER.
WAS SHE WICKED, EVIL, THE CHILD WONDERS, THAT SHE SHOULD BE PUNISHED SO? SHE THINKS OF SUICIDE, BUT LACKS THE COURAGE. SHE PRAYS THE GUARDS WILL TIRE OF HER AND SEND HER TO THE GAS CHAMBER. BUT THEY NEVER DO.
INSTEAD, IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE WAR...
...SHE IS DRAGGED BEFORE THE COMMANDANT, WHO POINTS A MAGIC WAND AT HER, CHANTS AN OBSCENE SPELL...
...AND TRANSFORMS HER INTO SOLID GOLD.

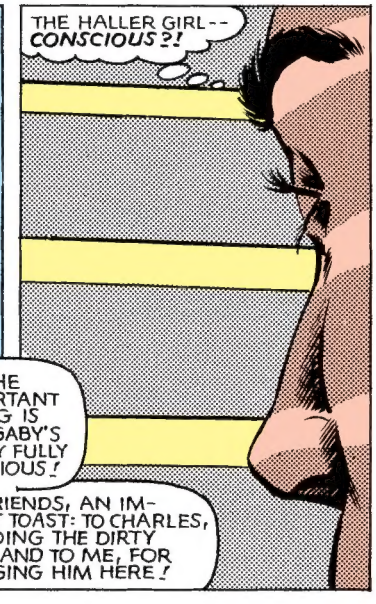

MOMMA!
POPPA!!


I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I PRAYED FOR A MIRACLE, CHARLES, BUT THIS--?! WHAT DID YOU DO?!
WHAT COMES NATURALLY, DANIEL. THAT'S IT, GABY, HAVE A GOOD CRY, THAT'S A DARLING. YOU'RE ALL RIGHT NOW. YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS. YOU'RE SAFE.
HELP ME PUT HER TO BED, WILL YOU? I'M AFRAID THIS HAS BEEN AN ORDEAL FOR BOTH OF US.


SHE'S ASLEEP. CARE TO EXPLAIN, CHARLES?
NOT PARTICULARLY. WE'VE MERELY TAKEN THE FIRST STEPS, YOU KNOW. THE PSYCHIC "DAM" HAS BEEN BROKEN, BUT SHE'S FAR FROM FULLY RECOVERED.
BUT NOW, AT LEAST, WE'VE MADE A BEGINNING.
AND THAT, GENTLEMEN, CALLS FOR A MODEST CELEBRATION. SHALL WE ADJOURN TO MY OFFICE?


MY FAVORITE "MOUNTAIN SPRING WATER." I'VE BEEN SAVING IT FOR A SPECIAL OCCASION.
I MUST SAY, CHARLES--DURING THAT SESSION, GABY EXPRESSED SOME REMARKABLE VERBAL IMAGES. S.S. GUARDS AS DEMONS AND OGRES, THE CREMATORIUMS AS THE GATES OF HELL. BUT HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE LAST ONE, HER TRANSFORMATION INTO A GOLDEN STATUE?
ALL HER OTHER IMAGES WERE GROUNDED IN REALITY. LOGICALLY, THEN, SO MUST THIS ONE.
IT WAS ASSOCIATED WITH EXTRAORDINARY PAIN AND FEAR.

BEYOND THAT, YOUR GUESS IS AS GOOD AS MINE.
WE'LL SORT IT OUT SOONER OR LATER.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT GABY'S FINALLY FULLY CONSCIOUS!
MY FRIENDS, AN IMMODEST TOAST: TO CHARLES, FOR DOING THE DIRTY WORK, AND TO ME, FOR BRINGING HIM HERE!


THE HALLER GIRL--CONSCIOUS?!

THE LEADER MUST BE INFORMED, AT ONCE!
OUR YEARS OF PATIENCE ARE AT LAST ABOUT TO BE REWARDED. THE PRIZE WE HAVE SOUGHT FOR SO LONG IS FINALLY WITHIN OUR GRASP!
SEIG HEIL!

OVER THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOW--AND WITH THE AID OF HER CONSTANT COMPANIONS, XAVIER AND MAGNUS-- GABY BRIDGES THE GULF BETWEEN CHILD- AND ADULT-HOOD, HER OLD LIFE IN HOLLAND AND HER NEW ONE IN ISRAEL, WITH REMARKABLE EASE.

TOGETHER, THE THREE FRIENDS RANGE THROUGHOUT THIS ANCIENT LAND, VIEWING ALL ITS MYRIAD WONDERS...

...FROM THE GALILEE TO DIVIDED JERUSALEM TO THE NEGEV DESERT. DURING THEIR TRAVELS, XAVIER DISCOVERS IN MAGNUS A FASCINATING, KINDRED SPIRIT--AND WHEN HE OUTLINES HIS NASCENT THEORIES ON HUMAN EVOLUTIONARY MUTATION, XAVIER IS DELIGHTED TO SEE THAT MAGNUS TAKES HIM SERIOUSLY.

HOWEVER, HE ALSO COMES TO REALIZE THAT, IN MANY WAYS, MAGNUS HAS BEEN AS DEEPLY SCARRED BY HIS EXPERIENCES AS GABY.

CHARLES, YOU ARE AN IDEALISTIC FOOL.

IF MUTANTS EXIST, HUMANITY WILL *FEAR* THEM AND OUT OF THAT FEAR, TRY TO *DESTROY* THEM.

THERE IS ONLY *ONE* WAY TO GUARANTEE THE SURVIVAL OF *HOMO SUPERIOR*, AND THAT IS FOR *THEM* TO HOLD THE REINS OF POWER.

MAGNUS IS WRONG. SUCH SECURITY CANNOT BE IMPOSED BY FEAR FROM ABOVE. IT MUST GROW FROM UNDERSTANDING...

Ahem!

Hmnh? OH, I'M SORRY, GABY. MY MIND WAS WANDERING.

THEN I'LL HAVE TO USE ALL MY FEMININE WILES...

...TO ATTRACT ITS ATTENTION.

Ahhh, GABY, YOU BELIEVE YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH ME.

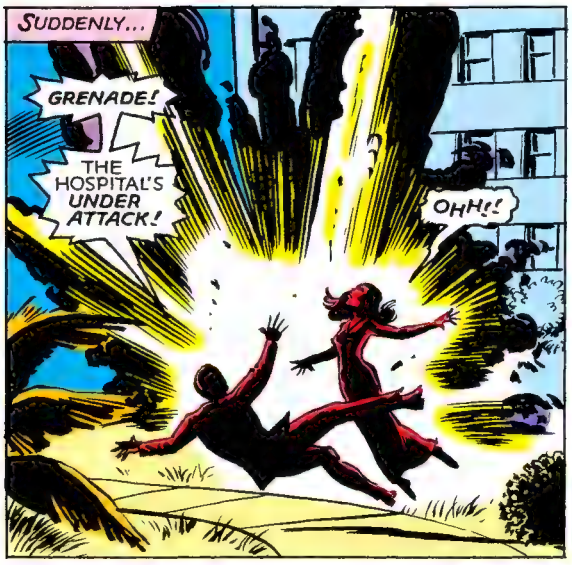
BUT YOU AREN'T. NOT REALLY. AND YET, YOUR NEED TO LOVE AND BE LOVED... IS AS GENUINE, AS GREAT, AS MY OWN.

I OWE YOU EVERYTHING, DEAR CHARLES. BUT I HAVE NO MEANS OF RE-PAYING YOU...

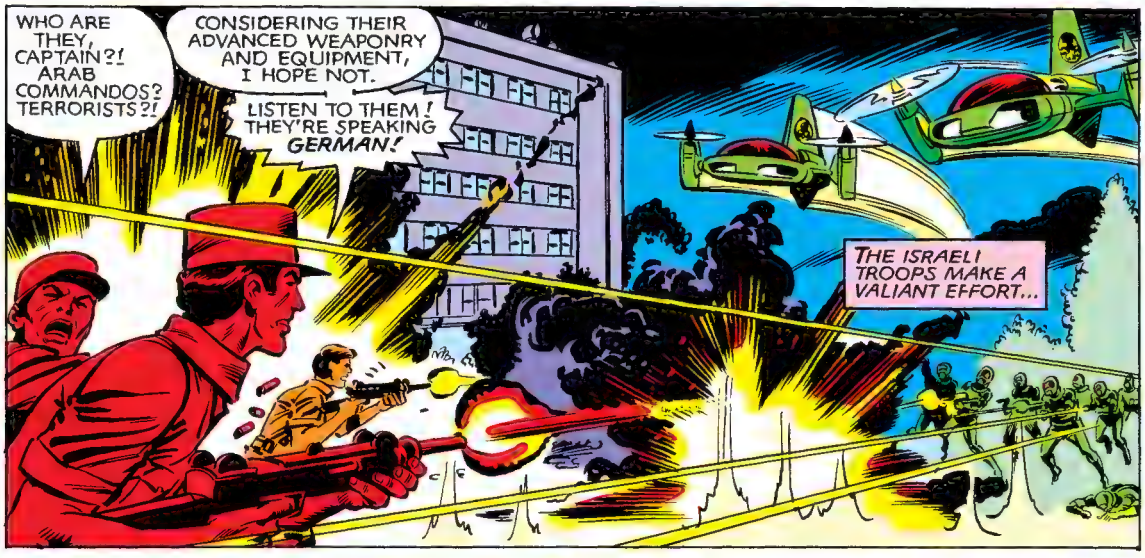
...SAVE THIS.

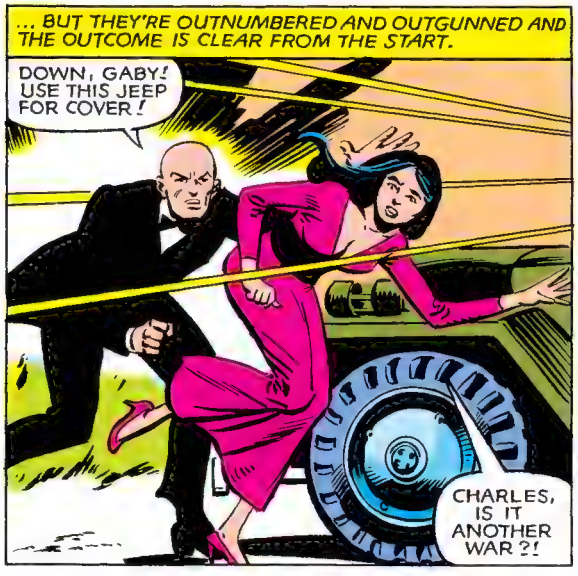
I SHOULD NOT DO THIS. BUT IF IT MAKES US BOTH HAPPY AND BRINGS US THE SOLACE WE SEEK...

...WHAT THEN IS THE HARM?

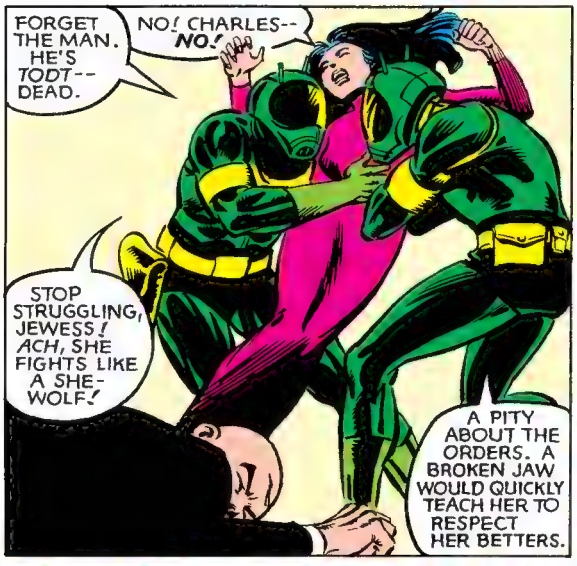

SUDDENLY...
GRENADE!
THE HOSPITAL'S UNDER ATTACK!
OHH!!

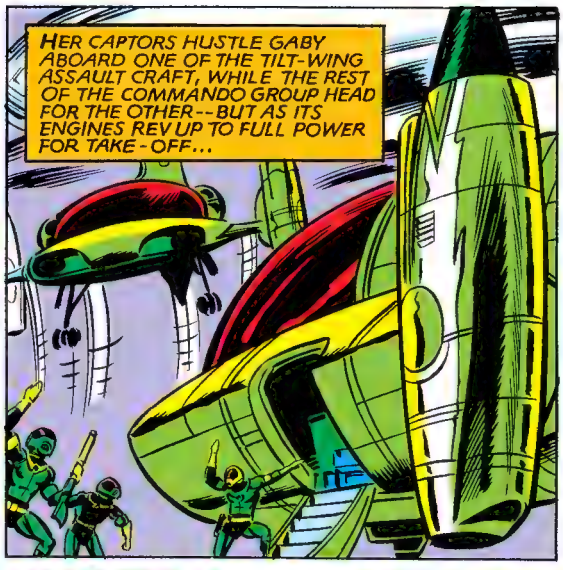
FIRST SQUAD, SECURE THE PERIMETER AND NEUTRALIZE ALL DEFENSES!
SECOND SQUAD, OUR OBJECTIVE-- THE HALLER WOMAN-- IS IN THE COURTYARD! SEIZE HER! AND REMEMBER YOUR ORDERS--
--SHE IS TO BE TAKEN ALIVE AND UNHARMED!

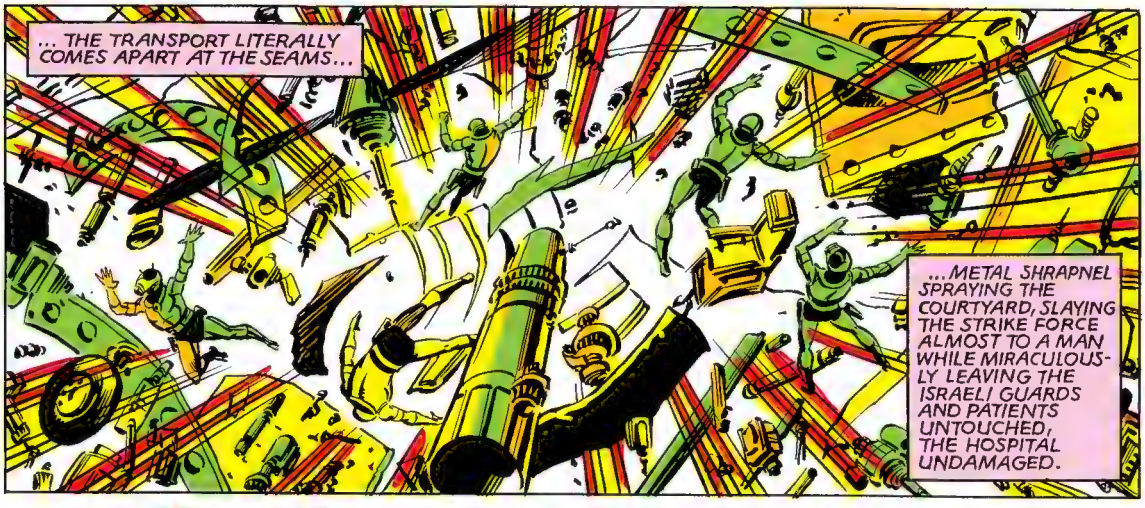

WHO ARE THEY, CAPTAIN?! ARAB COMMANDOS? TERRORISTS?!
CONSIDERING THEIR ADVANCED WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT, I HOPE NOT.
LISTEN TO THEM! THEY'RE SPEAKING GERMAN!
THE ISRAELI TROOPS MAKE A VALIANT EFFORT...

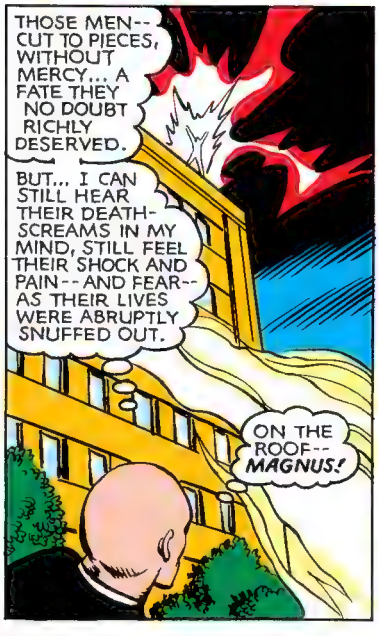

... BUT THEY'RE OUTNUMBERED AND OUTGUNNED AND THE OUTCOME IS CLEAR FROM THE START.
DOWN, GABY! USE THIS JEEP FOR COVER!
CHARLES, IS IT ANOTHER WAR?!

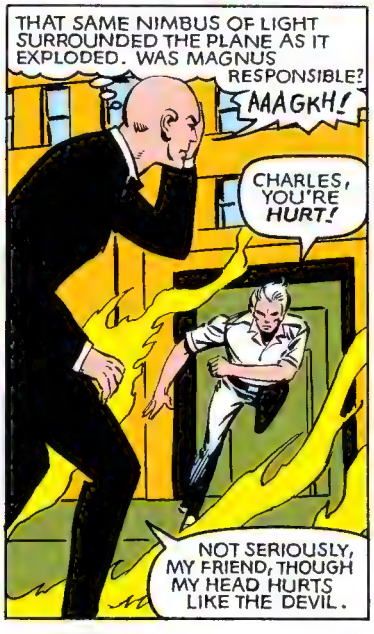
I DON'T KNOW
I'M RECEIVING STRAY THOUGHTS. THESE MERCENARIES ARE AFTER GABY AND THEY'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET HER. BUT WHY?!
THE ISRAELIS HAVEN'T A CHANCE-- UNLESS I USE MY PSI-POWERS TO EVEN THE ODDS--
ARRRGH!
CHARLES!!


FORGET THE MAN. HE'S TODT-- DEAD.
NO! CHARLES-- NO!
STOP STRUGGLING, JEWESS! ACH, SHE FIGHTS LIKE A SHE-WOLF!
A PITY ABOUT THE ORDERS. A BROKEN JAW WOULD QUICKLY TEACH HER TO RESPECT HER BETTERS.

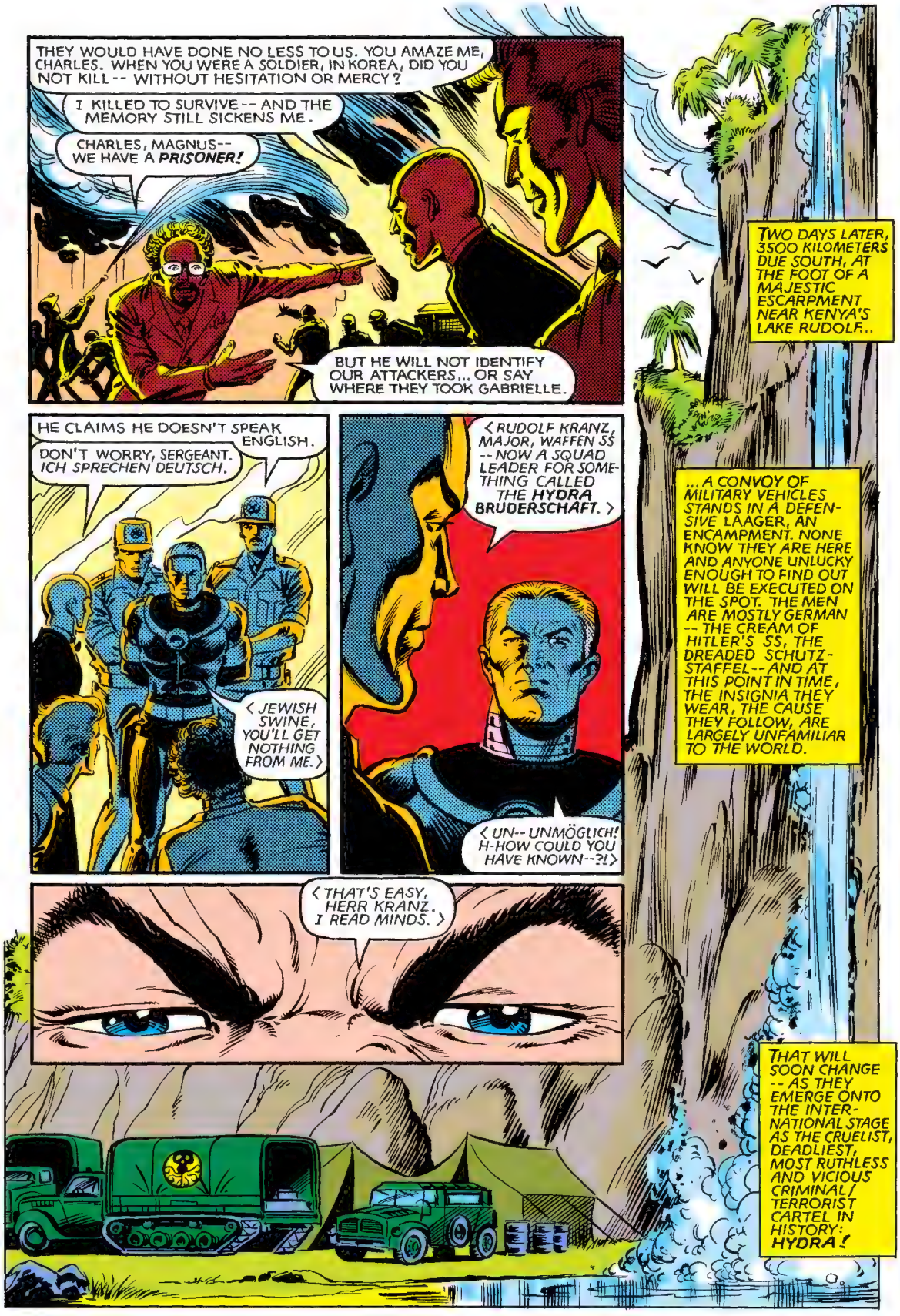

HER CAPTORS HUSTLE GABY ABOARD ONE OF THE TILT-WING ASSAULT CRAFT, WHILE THE REST OF THE COMMANDO GROUP HEAD FOR THE OTHER--BUT AS ITS ENGINES REV UP TO FULL POWER FOR TAKE-OFF...

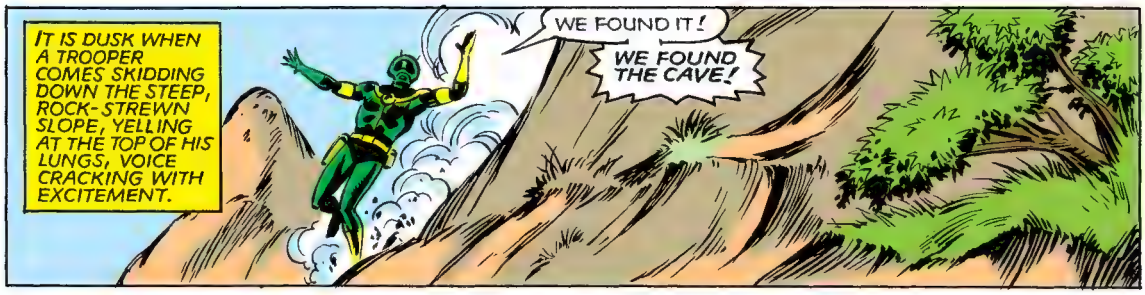

... THE TRANSPORT LITERALLY COMES APART AT THE SEAMS...
...METAL SHRAPNEL SPRAYING THE COURTYARD, SLAYING THE STRIKE FORCE ALMOST TO A MAN WHILE MIRACULOUSLY LEAVING THE ISRAELI GUARDS AND PATIENTS UNTOUCHED, THE HOSPITAL UNDAMAGED.

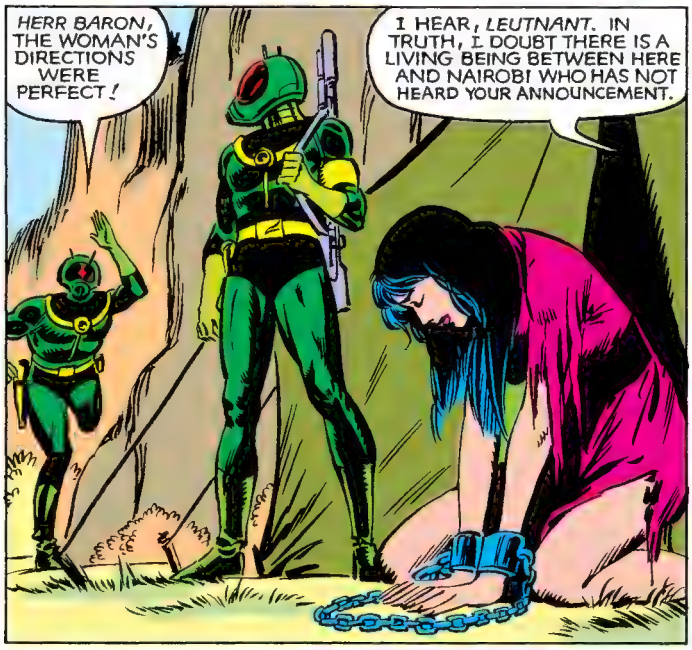

THOSE MEN-- CUT TO PIECES, WITHOUT MERCY... A FATE THEY NO DOUBT RICHLY DESERVED.
BUT... I CAN STILL HEAR THEIR DEATH-SCREAMS IN MY MIND, STILL FEEL THEIR SHOCK AND PAIN--AND FEAR-- AS THEIR LIVES WERE ABRUPTLY SNUFFED OUT.
ON THE ROOF-- MAGNUS!

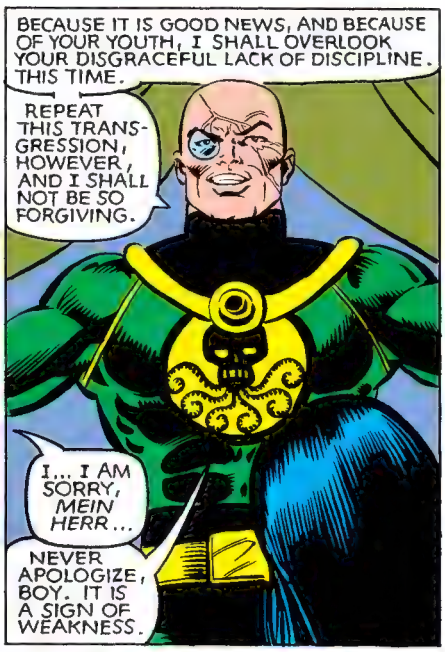

THAT SAME NIMBUS OF LIGHT SURROUNDED THE PLANE AS IT EXPLODED. WAS MAGNUS RESPONSIBLE?
AAAGKH!
CHARLES, YOU'RE HURT!
NOT SERIOUSLY, MY FRIEND, THOUGH MY HEAD HURTS LIKE THE DEVIL.

MAGNUS, WHAT DID YOU DO TO THAT AIRCRAFT?!
WHAT HAD TO BE DONE. MY ONLY REGRET WAS THAT I WAS UNABLE TO ACT SOONER.
WAS IT NECESSARY TO SLAUGHTER THEM?

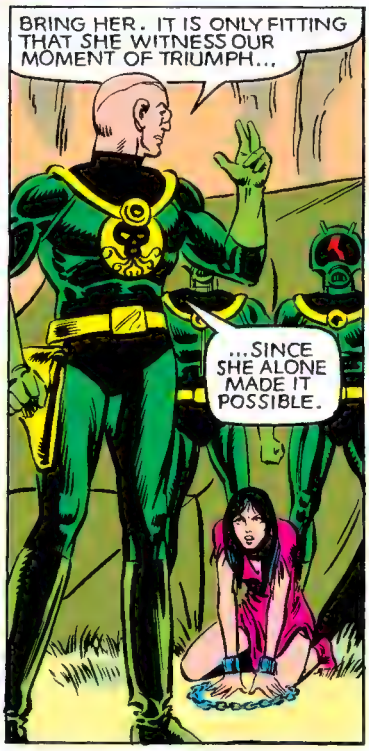

THEY WOULD HAVE DONE NO LESS TO US. YOU AMAZE ME, CHARLES. WHEN YOU WERE A SOLDIER, IN KOREA, DID YOU NOT KILL -- WITHOUT HESITATION OR MERCY?
I KILLED TO SURVIVE -- AND THE MEMORY STILL SICKENS ME.
CHARLES, MAGNUS -- WE HAVE A PRISONER!
BUT HE WILL NOT IDENTIFY OUR ATTACKERS... OR SAY WHERE THEY TOOK GABRIELLE.
TWO DAYS LATER, 3500 KILOMETERS DUE SOUTH, AT THE FOOT OF A MAJESTIC ESCARPMENT NEAR KENYA'S LAKE RUDOLF...
HE CLAIMS HE DOESN'T SPEAK ENGLISH.
DON'T WORRY, SERGEANT. ICH SPRECHEN DEUTSCH.
< JEWISH SWINE, YOU'LL GET NOTHING FROM ME. >
< RUDOLF KRANZ, MAJOR, WAFFEN SS -- NOW A SQUAD LEADER FOR SOMETHING CALLED THE HYDRA BRUDERSCHAFT. >
< UN-- UNMÖGLICH! H-HOW COULD YOU HAVE KNOWN--?! >
... A CONVOY OF MILITARY VEHICLES STANDS IN A DEFENSIVE LAAGER, AN ENCAMPMENT. NONE KNOW THEY ARE HERE AND ANYONE UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND OUT WILL BE EXECUTED ON THE SPOT. THE MEN ARE MOSTLY GERMAN -- THE CREAM OF HITLER'S SS, THE DREADED SCHUTZ-STAFFEL -- AND AT THIS POINT IN TIME, THE INSIGNIA THEY WEAR, THE CAUSE THEY FOLLOW, ARE LARGELY UNFAMILIAR TO THE WORLD.
< THAT'S EASY, HERR KRANZ. I READ MINDS. >
THAT WILL SOON CHANGE -- AS THEY EMERGE ONTO THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE AS THE CRUELIST, DEADLIEST, MOST RUTHLESS AND VICIOUS CRIMINAL/TERRORIST CARTEL IN HISTORY: HYDRA!


IT IS DUSK WHEN A TROOPER COMES SKIDDING DOWN THE STEEP, ROCK-STREWN SLOPE, YELLING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS, VOICE CRACKING WITH EXCITEMENT.
WE FOUND IT!
WE FOUND THE CAVE!


HERR BARON, THE WOMAN'S DIRECTIONS WERE PERFECT!
I HEAR, LEUTNANT. IN TRUTH, I DOUBT THERE IS A LIVING BEING BETWEEN HERE AND NAIROBI WHO HAS NOT HEARD YOUR ANNOUNCEMENT.

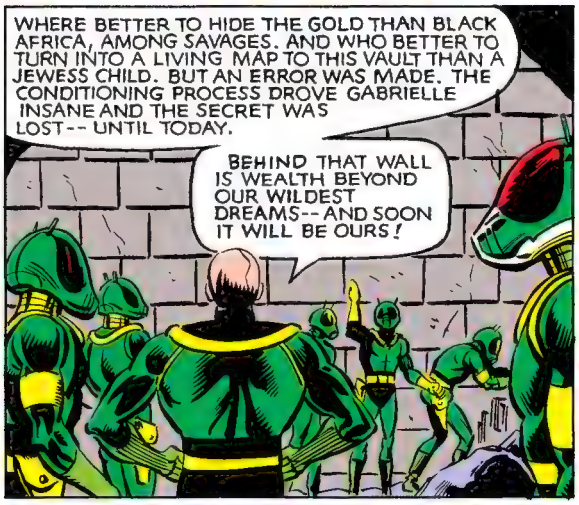

BECAUSE IT IS GOOD NEWS, AND BECAUSE OF YOUR YOUTH, I SHALL OVERLOOK YOUR DISGRACEFUL LACK OF DISCIPLINE. THIS TIME.
REPEAT THIS TRANSGRESSION, HOWEVER, AND I SHALL NOT BE SO FORGIVING.
I... I AM SORRY, MEIN HERR...
NEVER APOLOGIZE, BOY. IT IS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

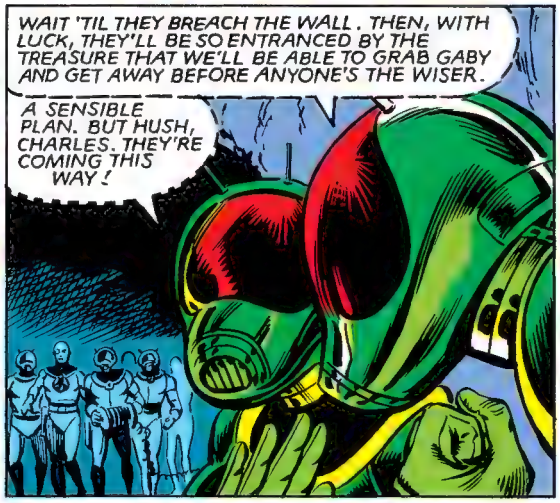
SO, MY PRETTY BIRD, YOUR SONG HAS LED US TO THE PRIZE WE HAVE SO LONG SOUGHT.
I SHOULD HAVE D-DIED BEFORE I TOLD YOU ANYTHING.
JA, BUT YOU ARE WEAK, GABRIELLE, LIKE ALL YOUR MONGREL RACE.


BRING HER. IT IS ONLY FITTING THAT SHE WITNESS OUR MOMENT OF TRIUMPH...
...SINCE SHE ALONE MADE IT POSSIBLE.

STRUCKER! THAT'S BARON STRUCKER! ONE OF THE MOST WANTED NAZI WAR CRIMINALS!
THE... THINGS HE DID TO GABY-- I SEE THEM, FEEL THEM, IN HER MIND. MAGNUS, HE TORTURED HER!
CALM YOURSELF, CHARLES, OR WE ARE LOST!
WE CANNOT AID GABY--OR BRING STRUCKER TO JUSTICE--IF YOU CONTINUE ACTING LIKE A LOVESICK SCHOOLBOY!

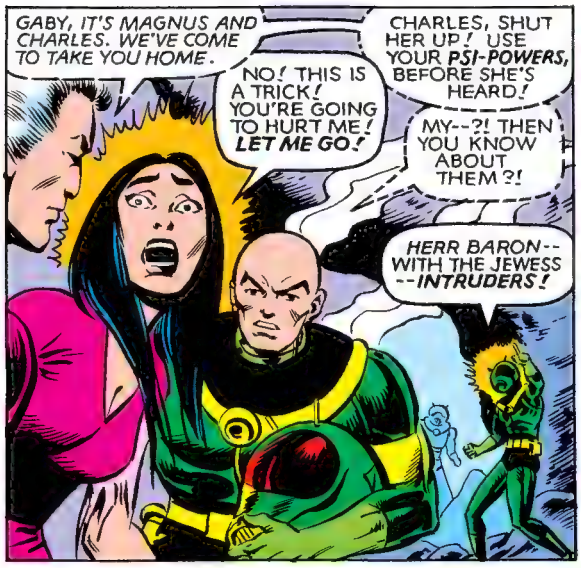
CLAD IN UNIFORMS "BORROWED" FROM TWO OF STRUCKER'S MEN--LYING BOUND AND UNCONSCIOUS IN A SUPPLY TRUCK--XAVIER AND MAGNUS FOLLOW THE MAIN PARTY INTO THE CAVE.
IT WAS A BRILLIANT PLOY. IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE WAR, THE DECISION WAS MADE TO SPIRIT THE FÜHRER'S PERSONAL GOLD RESERVES OUT OF GERMANY...
...IN HOPES THAT IT WOULD SOMEDAY FINANCE A RESURGENCE OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM--OF THE NAZI PARTY--AND EVENTUALLY, A FOURTH REICH!


WHERE BETTER TO HIDE THE GOLD THAN BLACK AFRICA, AMONG SAVAGES. AND WHO BETTER TO TURN INTO A LIVING MAP TO THIS VAULT THAN A JEWESS CHILD. BUT AN ERROR WAS MADE. THE CONDITIONING PROCESS DROVE GABRIELLE INSANE AND THE SECRET WAS LOST--UNTIL TODAY.
BEHIND THAT WALL IS WEALTH BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS--AND SOON IT WILL BE OURS!

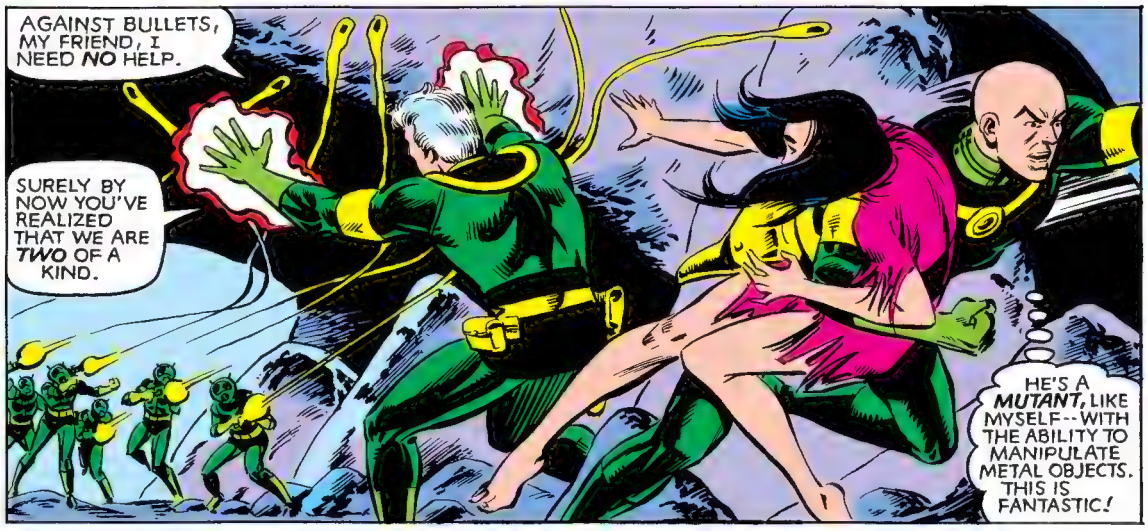

WAIT 'TIL THEY BREACH THE WALL. THEN, WITH LUCK, THEY'LL BE SO ENTRANCED BY THE TREASURE THAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO GRAB GABY AND GET AWAY BEFORE ANYONE'S THE WISER.
A SENSIBLE PLAN. BUT HUSH, CHARLES. THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY!

SOON, OUTSIDE...
KLIK
BOOM!

BEHOLD, KAMRADEN! THIS FORTUNE WILL PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR NEW ORDER, A BROTHERHOOD OF TERROR THAT WILL BRING THE DEMOCRACIES, THE COMMUNISTS, EVERY COUNTRY ON EARTH, TO THEIR COLLECTIVE KNEES!
WHERE OUR BELOVED FÜHRER, ADOLF HITLER, FAILED--HYDRA SHALL SUCCEED!
HAIL HYDRA!

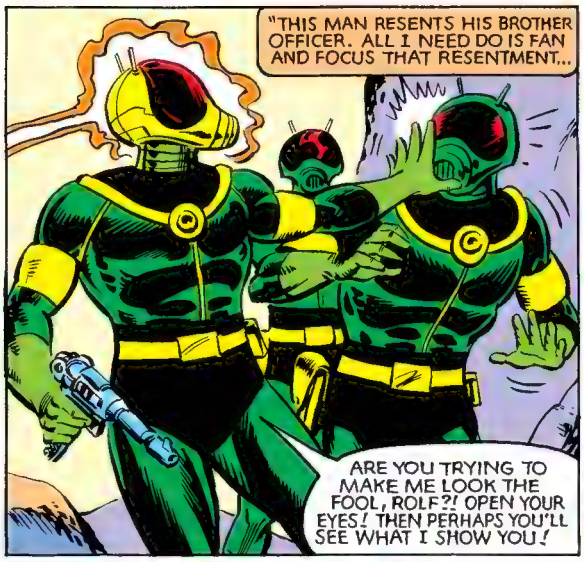

GABY, IT'S MAGNUS AND CHARLES. WE'VE COME TO TAKE YOU HOME.
NO! THIS IS A TRICK! YOU'RE GOING TO HURT ME! LET ME GO!
CHARLES, SHUT HER UP! USE YOUR PSI-POWERS, BEFORE SHE'S HEARD!
MY--?! THEN YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?!
HERR BARON--WITH THE JEWESS --INTRUDERS!

KILL THEM!
TAKE GABY, CHARLES! GET OUT OF HERE! I'LL COVER YOU!
YOU'LL NEED MY HELP, MAGNUS--!

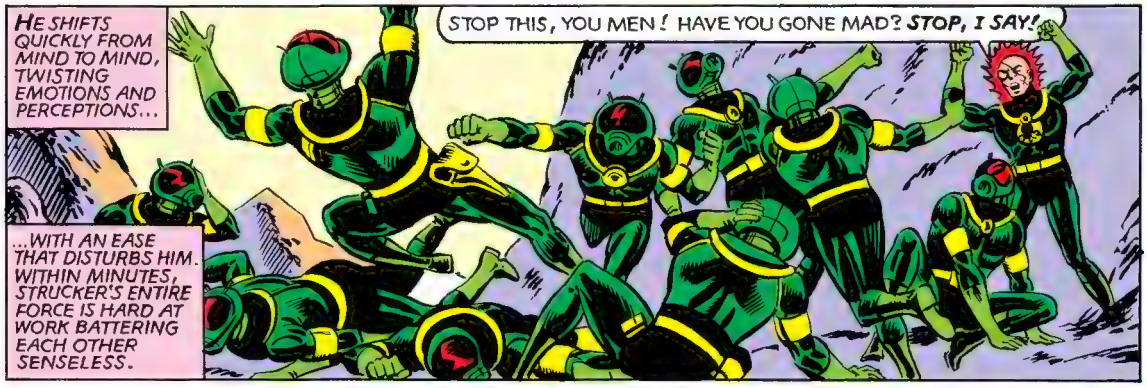

AGAINST BULLETS, MY FRIEND, I NEED NO HELP.
SURELY BY NOW YOU'VE REALIZED THAT WE ARE TWO OF A KIND.
HE'S A MUTANT, LIKE MYSELF--WITH THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE METAL OBJECTS. THIS IS FANTASTIC!

GABY'S MIND IS IN TURMOIL--TOO MANY SHOCKS COMING TOO SOON AFTER HER RECOVERY. IT'S MORE THAN SHE CAN HANDLE--BLAST!
THERE THEY ARE--eh?!?
WHERE, FRITZ?! I SEE NO ONE!
I'M MENTALLY AFFECTING THEIR VISUAL PERCEPTIONS, SO THAT THEIR MINDS REFUSE TO ACCEPT WHAT THEIR EYES SEE.

BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY MEN--MORE MINDS THAN I CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTROL. THIS "INVISIBILITY" GAMBIT IS AT BEST A STOPGAP MEASURE. WE NEED A DIVERSION.
I DO NOT LIKE CONSCIOUSLY MANIPULATING OTHER PEOPLES' MINDS, BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE...

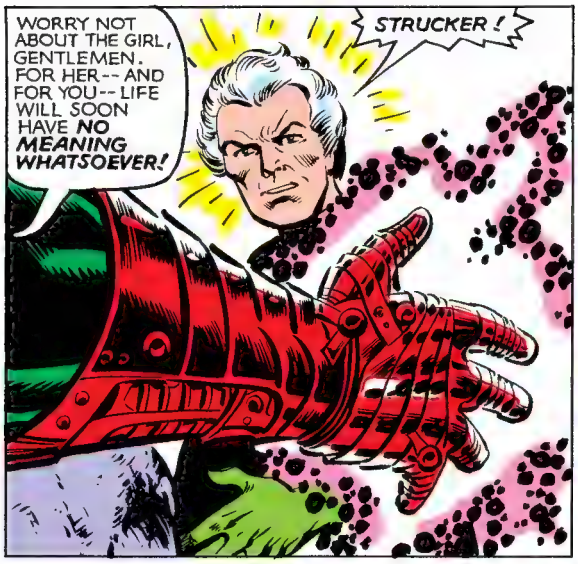

"THIS MAN RESENTS HIS BROTHER OFFICER. ALL I NEED DO IS FAN AND FOCUS THAT RESENTMENT...
ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE ME LOOK THE FOOL, ROLF?! OPEN YOUR EYES! THEN PERHAPS YOU'LL SEE WHAT I SHOW YOU!

"... UNTIL IT EXPLODES INTO VIOLENCE!"

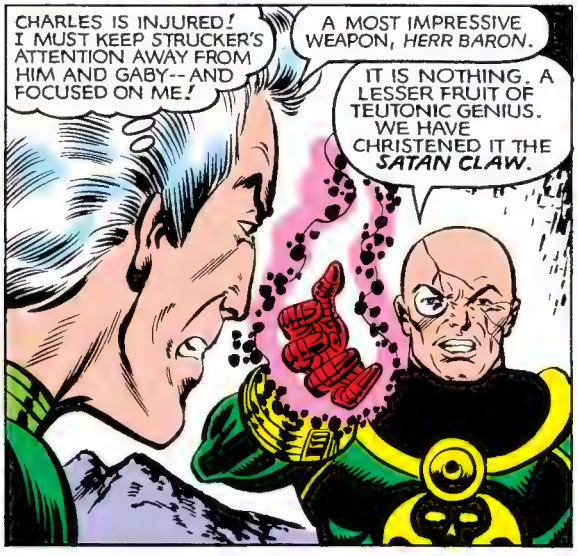

HE SHIFTS QUICKLY FROM MIND TO MIND, TWISTING EMOTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS...
STOP THIS, YOU MEN! HAVE YOU GONE MAD? STOP, I SAY!
...WITH AN EASE THAT DISTURBS HIM. WITHIN MINUTES, STRUCKER'S ENTIRE FORCE IS HARD AT WORK BATTERING EACH OTHER SENSELESS.

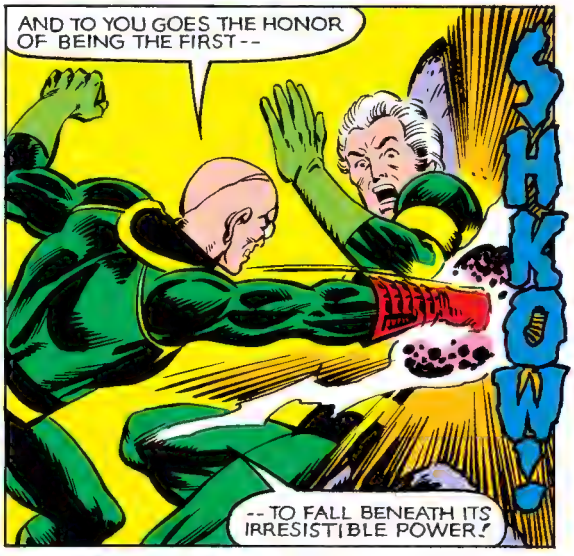
A BRILLIANT STRATEGEM, CHARLES.
IT WAS NECESSARY, BUT I TAKE NO SATISFACTION IN IT.
ONE DAY, MY FRIEND, THAT SQUEAMISHNESS WILL COST YOU. WHAT AILS GABY?
SHE'S GONE INTO SHOCK, REVERTING TO HER PREVIOUS CATATONIC STATE.
I HAVE TO BRING HER OUT OF IT BEFORE SHE WITHDRAWS SO DEEPLY THAT WE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO REACH HER.

USE YOUR PSI-POWERS. THEY WORKED BEFORE, NO? AND HURRY UP. THE SOONER WE'RE ON OUR WAY, THE BETTER.
I DARE NOT MIND-PROBE HER. SHE'LL BECOME DEPENDANT ON MY ABILITY. THE SLIGHTEST SHOCK WILL BE CAPABLE OF SHATTERING HER PSYCHE, BECAUSE SHE'LL BELIEVE THAT I'LL BE THERE TO PUT THINGS RIGHT AGAIN.
BUT I WON'T BE. SHE MUST DEVELOP A PSYCHIC RESILIENCE TO ENABLE HER TO COPE WITH THE EVERYDAY--AND THE EXTRAORDINARY--STRESSES OF LIFE. AND TO DO THAT, SHE MUST PULL OUT OF THIS HERSELF. SHE MUST WANT TO LIVE!
D'YOU HEAR ME, GABY?! COME BACK! FIGHT!

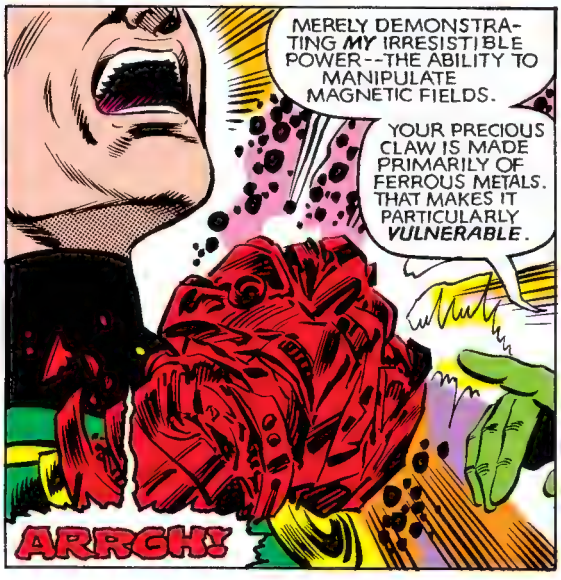

WORRY NOT ABOUT THE GIRL, GENTLEMEN. FOR HER-- AND FOR YOU-- LIFE WILL SOON HAVE NO MEANING WHATSOEVER!
STRUCKER!

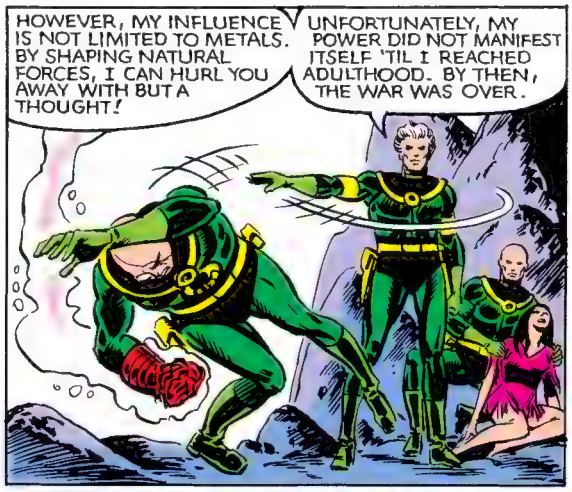
I DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU AFFECTED MY MEN, BUT YOU'LL NOT FIND ME SO EASY TO DEFEAT.
HIS RESISTANCE IS STRONGER THAN THE OTHERS-- I CAN'T CONTROL HIS MIND!
THAT GAUNTLET SHATTERED THE BOULDER! I MUST PROTECT GABY FROM THE SHARDS OF FLYING ROCK--!

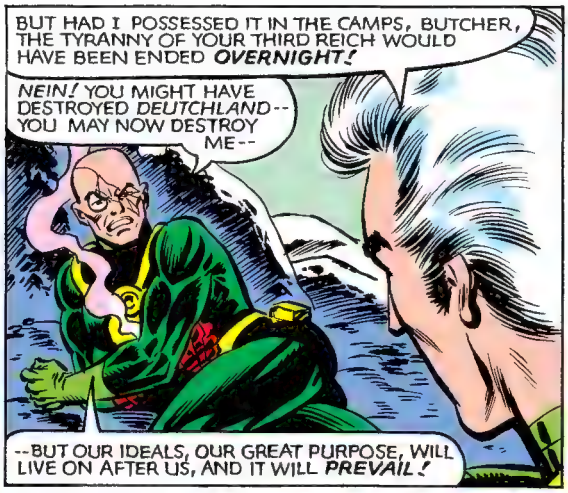

CHARLES IS INJURED! I MUST KEEP STRUCKER'S ATTENTION AWAY FROM HIM AND GABY-- AND FOCUSED ON ME!
A MOST IMPRESSIVE WEAPON, HERR BARON.
IT IS NOTHING. A LESSER FRUIT OF TEUTONIC GENIUS. WE HAVE CHRISTENED IT THE SATAN CLAW.


AND TO YOU GOES THE HONOR OF BEING THE FIRST--
SHKOW!
--TO FALL BENEATH ITS IRRESISTIBLE POWER!

NO, BARON. YOU WILL FIND ME CONSIDERABLY HARDER TO SLAY THAN YOUR COUNTRYMEN DID MY FAMILY AT AUSCHWITZ.
M- MY HAND--! WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!

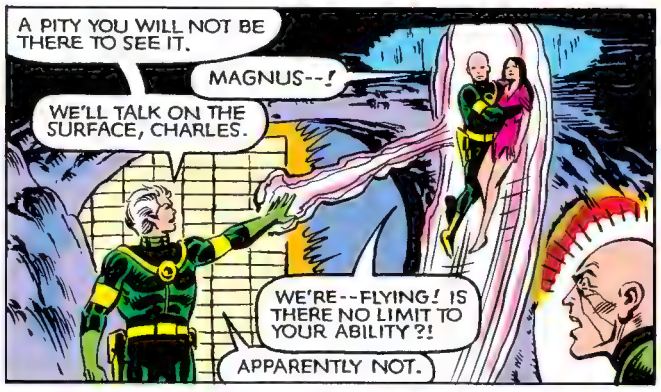

MERELY DEMONSTRATING MY IRRESISTIBLE POWER--THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE MAGNETIC FIELDS.
YOUR PRECIOUS CLAW IS MADE PRIMARILY OF FERROUS METALS. THAT MAKES IT PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE.
ARRGH!

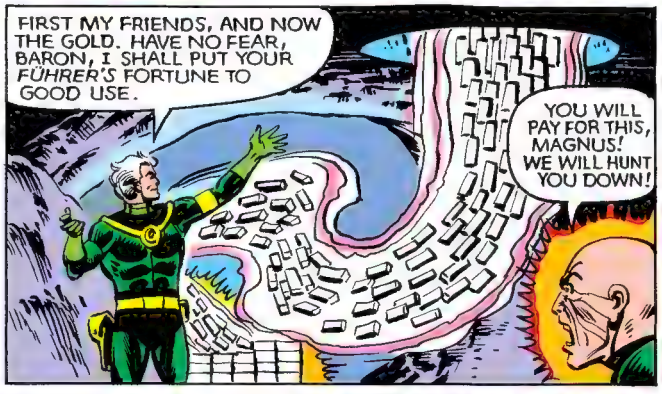

HOWEVER, MY INFLUENCE IS NOT LIMITED TO METALS. BY SHAPING NATURAL FORCES, I CAN HURL YOU AWAY WITH BUT A THOUGHT!
UNFORTUNATELY, MY POWER DID NOT MANIFEST ITSELF 'TIL I REACHED ADULTHOOD. BY THEN, THE WAR WAS OVER.

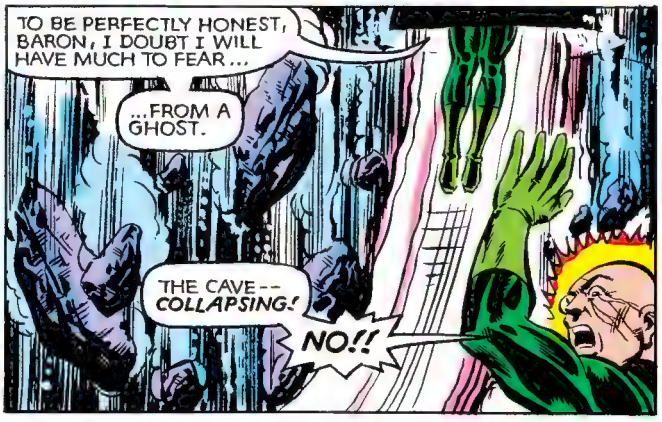

BUT HAD I POSSESSED IT IN THE CAMPS, BUTCHER, THE TYRANNY OF YOUR THIRD REICH WOULD HAVE BEEN ENDED OVERNIGHT!
NEIN! YOU MIGHT HAVE DESTROYED DEUTCHLAND-- YOU MAY NOW DESTROY ME--
--BUT OUR IDEALS, OUR GREAT PURPOSE, WILL LIVE ON AFTER US, AND IT WILL PREVAIL!

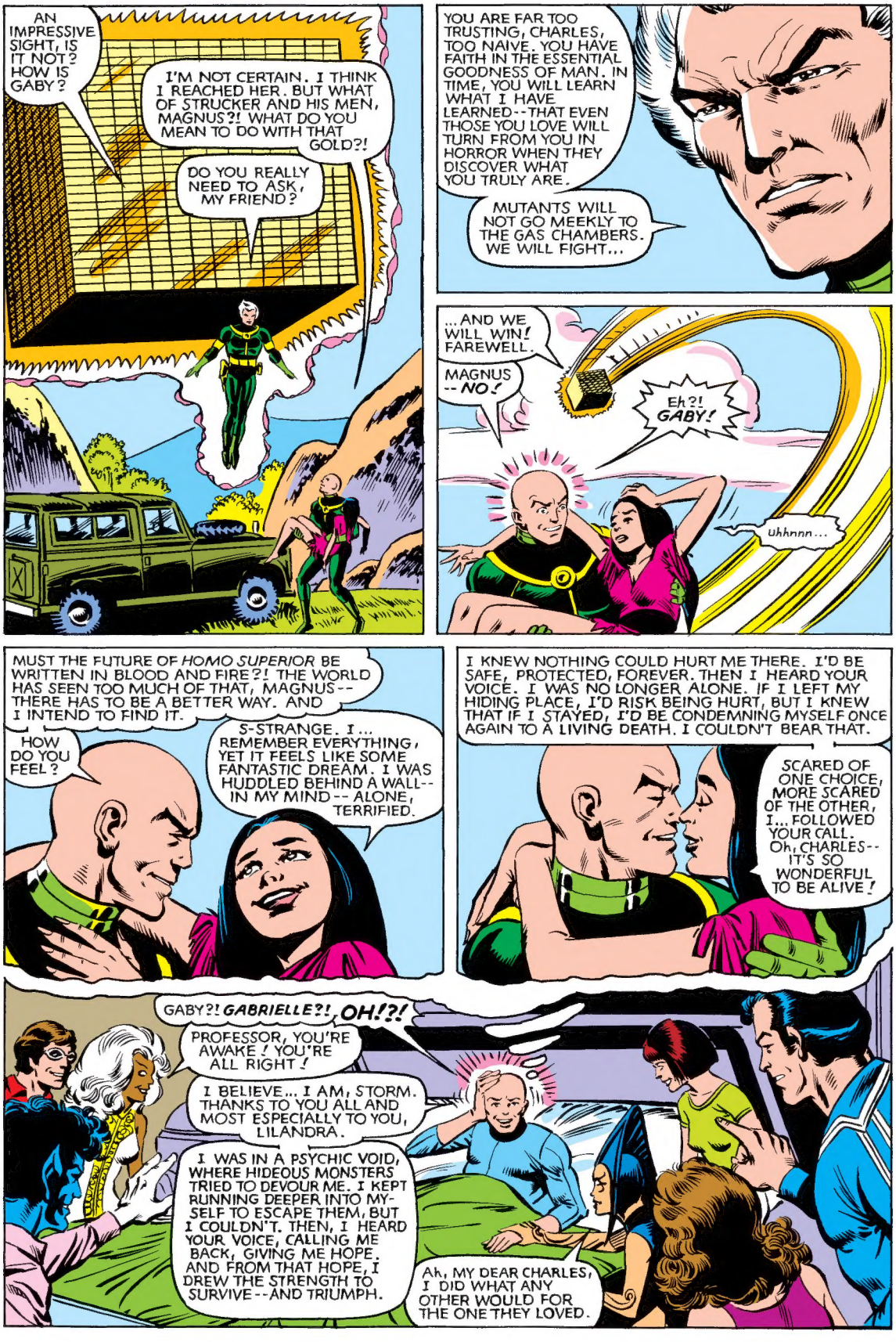
ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE, NAZI. HATE IS MORE POPULAR THAN LOVE, FEAR MORE PREVALENT THAN TRUST.
IF HUMANITY WISHES TO FOLLOW YOU TO ITS DAMNATION, SO BE IT.
I CARE NOTHING FOR YOU, OR THEM. AND WHEN HOMO SAPIENS ARE NO MORE, HOMO SUPERIOR WILL CLAIM THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE...

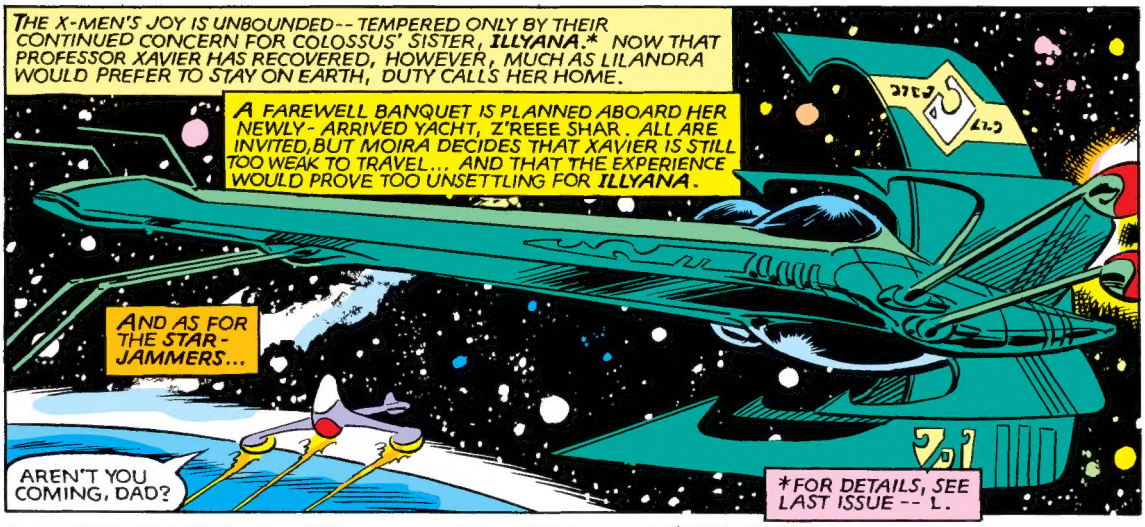
...AS LORDS OF THE EARTH!

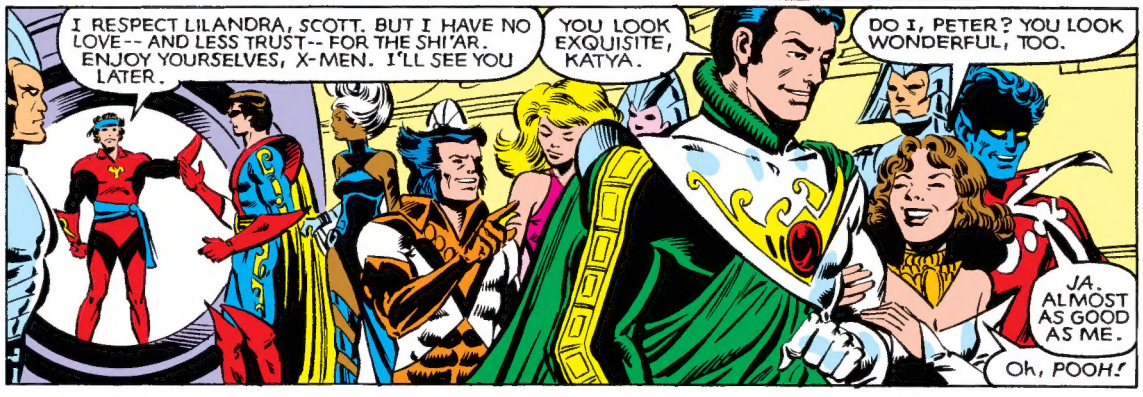

A PITY YOU WILL NOT BE THERE TO SEE IT.
MAGNUS--!
WE'LL TALK ON THE SURFACE, CHARLES.
WE'RE--FLYING! IS THERE NO LIMIT TO YOUR ABILITY?!
APPARENTLY NOT.

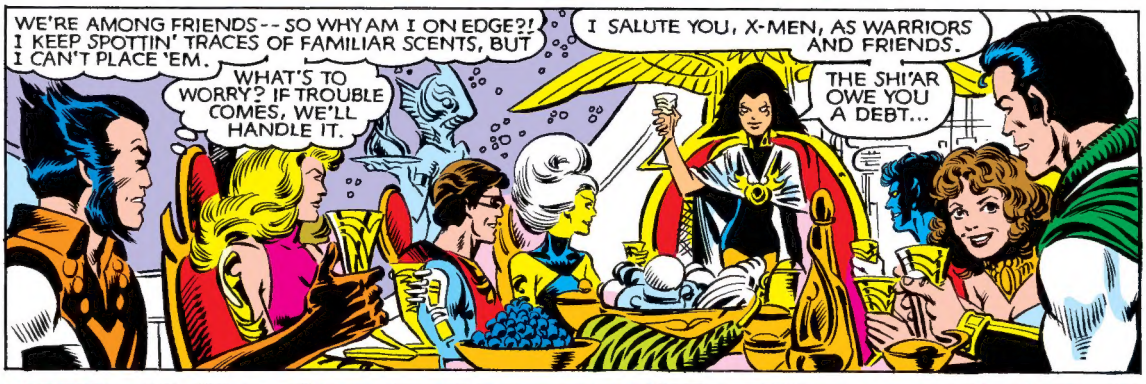

FIRST MY FRIENDS, AND NOW THE GOLD. HAVE NO FEAR, BARON, I SHALL PUT YOUR FÜHRER'S FORTUNE TO GOOD USE.
YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS, MAGNUS! WE WILL HUNT YOU DOWN!


TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, BARON, I DOUBT I WILL HAVE MUCH TO FEAR...
...FROM A GHOST.
THE CAVE-- COLLAPSING!
NO!!

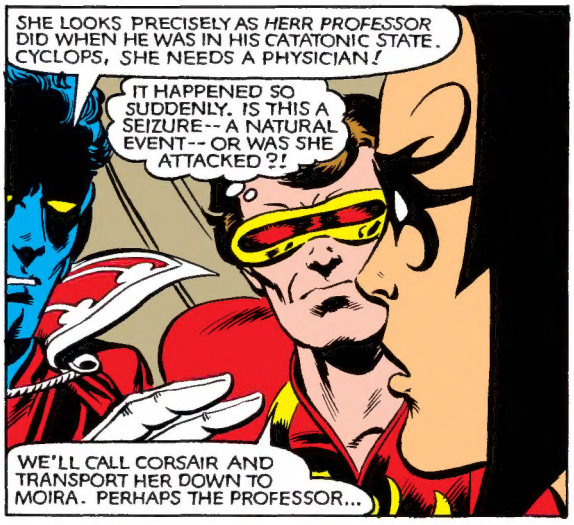

AN IMPRESSIVE SIGHT, IS IT NOT? HOW IS GABY?
I'M NOT CERTAIN. I THINK I REACHED HER. BUT WHAT OF STRUCKER AND HIS MEN, MAGNUS?! WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO WITH THAT GOLD?!
DO YOU REALLY NEED TO ASK, MY FRIEND?
YOU ARE FAR TOO TRUSTING, CHARLES, TOO NAIVE. YOU HAVE FAITH IN THE ESSENTIAL GOODNESS OF MAN. IN TIME, YOU WILL LEARN WHAT I HAVE LEARNED--THAT EVEN THOSE YOU LOVE WILL TURN FROM YOU IN HORROR WHEN THEY DISCOVER WHAT YOU TRULY ARE.
MUTANTS WILL NOT GO MEEKLY TO THE GAS CHAMBERS. WE WILL FIGHT...
...AND WE WILL WIN! FAREWELL.
MAGNUS --NO!
Eh?! GABY!
Uhhnnn...
MUST THE FUTURE OF HOMO SUPERIOR BE WRITTEN IN BLOOD AND FIRE?! THE WORLD HAS SEEN TOO MUCH OF THAT, MAGNUS--THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY. AND I INTEND TO FIND IT.
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
S-STRANGE. I... REMEMBER EVERYTHING, YET IT FEELS LIKE SOME FANTASTIC DREAM. I WAS HUDDLED BEHIND A WALL--IN MY MIND-- ALONE, TERRIFIED.
I KNEW NOTHING COULD HURT ME THERE. I'D BE SAFE, PROTECTED, FOREVER. THEN I HEARD YOUR VOICE. I WAS NO LONGER ALONE. IF I LEFT MY HIDING PLACE, I'D RISK BEING HURT, BUT I KNEW THAT IF I STAYED, I'D BE CONDEMNING MYSELF ONCE AGAIN TO A LIVING DEATH. I COULDN'T BEAR THAT.
SCARED OF ONE CHOICE, MORE SCARED OF THE OTHER, I... FOLLOWED YOUR CALL. OH, CHARLES--IT'S SO WONDERFUL TO BE ALIVE!
GABY?! GABRIELLE?! OH!?!
PROFESSOR, YOU'RE AWAKE! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
I BELIEVE... I AM, STORM. THANKS TO YOU ALL AND MOST ESPECIALLY TO YOU, LILANDRA.
I WAS IN A PSYCHIC VOID, WHERE HIDEOUS MONSTERS TRIED TO DEVOUR ME. I KEPT RUNNING DEEPER INTO MYSELF TO ESCAPE THEM, BUT I COULDN'T. THEN, I HEARD YOUR VOICE, CALLING ME BACK, GIVING ME HOPE. AND FROM THAT HOPE, I DREW THE STRENGTH TO SURVIVE--AND TRIUMPH.
Ah, MY DEAR CHARLES, I DID WHAT ANY OTHER WOULD FOR THE ONE THEY LOVED.

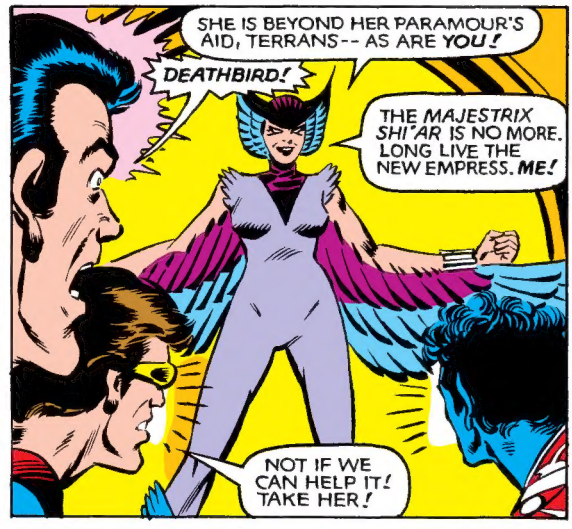

THE X-MEN'S JOY IS UNBOUNDED-- TEMPERED ONLY BY THEIR CONTINUED CONCERN FOR COLOSSUS' SISTER, ILLYANA.* NOW THAT PROFESSOR XAVIER HAS RECOVERED, HOWEVER, MUCH AS LILANDRA WOULD PREFER TO STAY ON EARTH, DUTY CALLS HER HOME.
A FAREWELL BANQUET IS PLANNED ABOARD HER NEWLY-ARRIVED YACHT, Z'REEE SHAR. ALL ARE INVITED, BUT MOIRA DECIDES THAT XAVIER IS STILL TOO WEAK TO TRAVEL... AND THAT THE EXPERIENCE WOULD PROVE TOO UNSETTLING FOR ILLYANA.
AND AS FOR THE STAR-JAMMERS...
AREN'T YOU COMING, DAD?
*FOR DETAILS, SEE LAST ISSUE -- L.

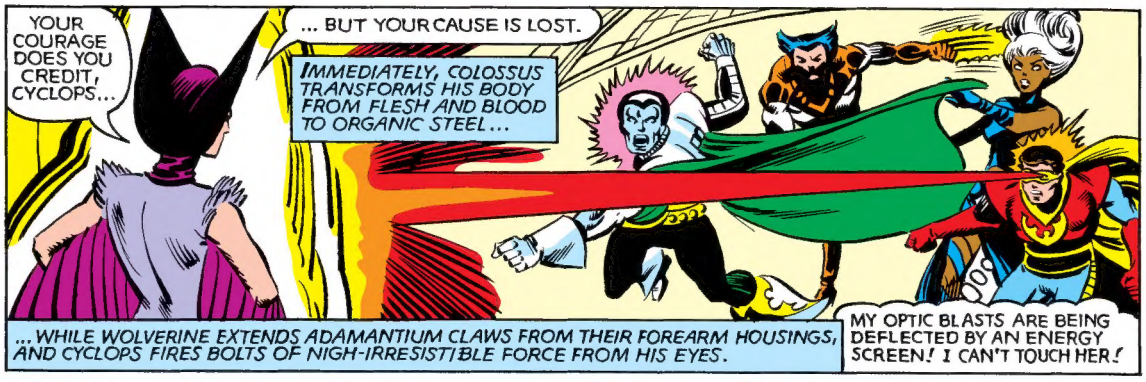

I RESPECT LILANDRA, SCOTT. BUT I HAVE NO LOVE-- AND LESS TRUST-- FOR THE SHI'AR. ENJOY YOURSELVES, X-MEN. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
YOU LOOK EXQUISITE, KATYA.
DO I, PETER? YOU LOOK WONDERFUL, TOO.
JA. ALMOST AS GOOD AS ME.
Oh, POOH!

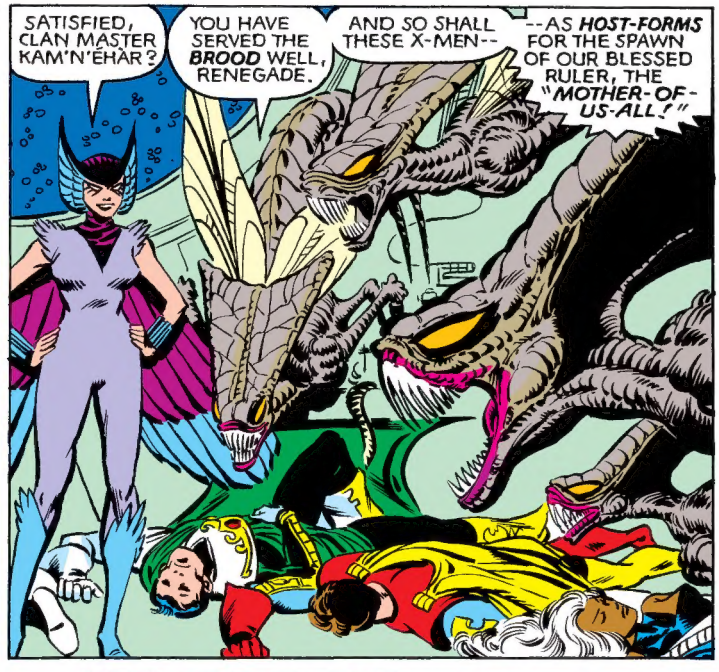

WE'RE AMONG FRIENDS-- SO WHY AM I ON EDGE?! I KEEP SPOTTIN' TRACES OF FAMILIAR SCENTS, BUT I CAN'T PLACE 'EM.
WHAT'S TO WORRY? IF TROUBLE COMES, WE'LL HANDLE IT.
I SALUTE YOU, X-MEN, AS WARRIORS AND FRIENDS.
THE SHI'AR OWE YOU A DEBT...

...THAT CAN NEVER...
... CAN NEVER...
... CAN NEVER...
LILANDRA?!
YOUR MAJESTY, WHAT'S THE MATTER?!









NEXT ISSUE

A JOURNEY OF A MILLION LIGHT-YEARS BEGINS WITH AN...

ESCAPE!

MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob